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MEMOIRS

OF

ANTONIO CANOVA.

EDINBURGH,
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MEMOIRS

OF

ANTONIO CANOVA,

WITH

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HIS WORKS,

AND

AN HISTORICAL VIEW

OF

MODERN SCULPTURE.

Manca il parlar :—di vivo altro non chiedi ;
Né manca questo ancor, s'agli occhi credi.

TASSO.

BY J. S. MEMES, A. M.
MEMBER OF THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON, &c.

EDINBURGH:

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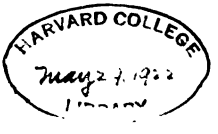

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LIFE

OF

CANOVA.

CHAPTER I.

Advantages of commencing with an historical view of modern sculpture—Subject proposed, and erroneous opinions combated—True causes of the revival of the arts in the 12th century—Establishment of independence by the republics of Italy—Primitive school of sculpture in Pisa—Early political constitution, and schools of art in Florence—General reflections on the style, character, and progress of sculpture during the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries—State of Italy at the beginning of the 15th century—Competition of artists at Florence—Ghiberti, Donatello, and their scholars—Venetian, Lombard, and Neapolitan schools—Florentine artists at the close of this century—General observations on the style and character of sculpture at this era.

At the period, when the subject of these memoirs presented himself a youthful candidate for renown, sculpture had fallen in-

to a state, which, compared with the former splendour of the art, might be termed one of utter degradation. The mannerism of schools had banished the study of nature,—affectation usurped the name of grace,—sublimity was sought in exaggerated forms,—and genius and originality seemed to have fled for ever. When the young artist arrived in Rome, this "capital of art" could hardly be said to boast the presence of a single sculptor. The usual proportion of *marble-cutters* [1], indeed, still occupied her studios, whose labours were confined to the restoration of antiques, or who might occasionally venture on a *replica* of some favourite statue. Great and original works, however, seemed to have been long abandoned, while the mediocrity of artists, and the illiberality of patronage, operated with reciprocal, and deteriorating effect.

[1] *Marbriers* is the term used by Quatremere de Quincy, in speaking of the Italian sculptors at the close of the eighteenth century, a word which implies even something lower than a marble-cutter,—a stone-cutter.

Amid this general corruption, CANOVA appeared; his mind, by self-instruction in the school of nature, imbued with the pure principles of genuine art. By his exertions and example, concurring with influences of a less active or less obvious kind, the beauty and simplicity of ancient taste were again gradually restored, while, between his own productions, and those of early co-temporaries, a mighty interval was placed. In some degree, then, to have appreciated the abilities of Canova, his attainments and professional improvements must, at least, have been compared with the general refinement of the age;—to have rendered fully apparent the superiority of his genius, the adverse and unfavourable circumstances, under which its early creations had been produced, were carefully to be considered;—and his advances, to have been duly estimated, were to be viewed in relation to the resources of co-existing art. Still, the conclusions would have been partial, because to have rested here, must have left the views incomplete. The universal de-

clension might have been rendered evident; yet neither its progress nor extent would, with precision, have been traced. More elaborate research will not only illustrate these important particulars, but, while it elucidates a pleasing department of history, will supply the means of determining the merits of Canova, not merely as compared with the obscure rivals of his youth, but as confronted with those illustrious masters, whose works have marked the brightest eras of modern sculpture.

Nor, in rapidly reviewing the principal vicissitudes in the history of sculpture, from the 12th to the 19th century, will the subject be wanting in the recommendations of novelty. There is here, still a vacuity in the annals of art, which no condensed, or popular narrative yet supplies [1].

[1] "La scultùra propriamente detta, e più particolarménte quella, che dâi Pisani, a Canova racchiudèva il gíro di sei sécoli fosse rimásta *finora, séza uno stórico.*" Cicognara, Storia della Scultura, tom. iii. p. 312. Ediz. 500 esemp. iii. tom. fol. Venezia. This most excellent work is the only properly historical compi-

In this review, the order of time only will be regarded, to the exclusion of all artificial divisions into epochs, —ages, — states, by which chronology has been confused, and art not illustrated [1]. In tracing the progress of individual intellect, it is frequently easy to determine a period, whence a conspicuous change in its operations and productions may be dated. The march of general improvement is more equable; and it is rarely possible, without violence, to class its gradations under the often, imaginary distinctions of arbitrary arrangement.

The decline and revival of the arts in the West, have been ascribed too exclusively

lation on the subject; but as is sagely inquired, in speaking of this very book, *A présent, qui lise des tomes en folio?* An. des Savans—1819.

[1] Thus Agincourt has placed Donatello in what he terms "the first age of the revival," and Ghiberti in "the second," an arrangement which would naturally lead to the conclusion, that Ghiberti was the younger; whereas they were not only cotemporaries, but Donatello was considerably the junior. But to multiply instances would be as easy, as it would be tedious.

to those great events, which successively changed both the political, and literary aspect of this portion of Europe—the invasion of the Goths,—and the fall of Constantinople.

From various causes of partial judgment, it has usually been considered, that the occupation of Italy by the barbarous warriors who overthrew the Roman power, was followed, in every part of the western empire, by the total extinction of learning and refinement. On the other hand, the re-appearance of the arts in the twelfth, and their succeeding splendour in the fifteenth century, have been attributed, —the former to the occasional influx of Greek artists,—the latter to the misfortunes of the eastern capital, which forced her natives to seek an asylum in Italy, where they at once diffused the light of philosophy, and the elegance of art [1].

[1] Vasari is generally quoted as an original authority in support of these opinions. His assertions, in this instance, must be limited to his own art, and even then are without proofs. This writer may be depended on

In opposition to these opinions, however, it may be shewn,—that, in Italy, neither the monuments of ancient taste were destroyed, nor living science exterminated by its conquerors;—that, in the various principalities into which this country was subsequently divided, the arts were never entirely extinct, and were always cultivated chiefly by natives;—that, in the schools of Tuscany, prior to the final disasters of the eastern capital, the arts had attained a degree of eminence, which, in some respects, has never been excelled.

In every part of the Roman empire, for ages antecedent to the invasion of its western provinces, the powers of genius, as well as military virtue, and moral worth, had been rapidly declining. In the remoter divisions, where improvement had neither been so universal, nor purity of taste so long preserved by the monuments of better

when speaking of cotemporaries, or of such transactions as he may have been personally engaged in. On other occasions, he frequently details loose traditions, without having properly examined their grounds.

days; this decline was greatly accelerated, and the feeble remains of civilization quickly overwhelmed by the succeeding deluge of barbarism. But, in Italy, the inhabitants were more generally enlightened, and more firmly attached to the cultivation of elegant accomplishment in letters and in art. Though no longer capable of rivalling the sublime productions of their ancestors, they still aspired to imitate those models of excellence, which they more abundantly possessed than others, and which served, not less to preserve knowledge, than to excite emulation [1]. Their conquerors also, were less ignorant and brutal than those, by whom the more distant portions of the dismembered empire were finally occupied. They had principally been educated in the armies of Rome;—they spoke her language;—they venerated her gran-

[1] The ruins of the palace of Theodoric, at Terracina, though of different materials, evidently shew that the edifice has been constructed on the model of similar buildings of the classic ages, of which the situations resembled. The above is only one of many instances.

deur,—but they despised her weakness; and their ambition seized what their valour had rashly been entrusted to defend. When the fury of contest had passed, therefore,—when conquest was secure,—they were disposed rather to encourage, than to suppress the arts and studies of their more cultivated, but unwarlike subjects;—to admire, rather than destroy the vestiges of still brighter periods. Even in northern Italy, and in the south of Gaul, seminaries were established, where such learning as was then valued, received encouragement and protection [1].

Whatever may have been the fate of those arts, the materials and productions

[1] To quote all the authorities by which the reasoning in the text is supported, would be tedious as well as unnecessary. The following may be referred to:—Gibbon, Decline, passim, last vol. more particularly; Robertson, History of Char. V. vol. i.; David, Ess. sur l'Art Statuaire; Cicognara, Stor. del Scult., tom. i.; Hist. de Fr. P. les Benedict.; Bargæus ap. Græv., tom. iv.; Cassiodorus, pass.; Murat. Ant. d'Italia; Letters of Theodoric, &c. &c. Theodoric used to style the monuments of antiquity, "the books of the world."

of which are of a more perishable nature, as well as more purely ornamental, their superior utility, and intimate union, preserved, in some degree of reputation, the kindred studies of architecture, and of sculpture. Both, though in very different states of perfection, were alike necessary to maintain the gloomy magnificence of the feudal baron, as formerly to gratify the polished elegance of the Roman patrician. Accordingly, we trace a very early and almost continuous cultivation of those arts, in the monuments of Naples, of Pisa, of Venice, of Orvieto, of Siena, and of other cities, the antiquities of which unite as it were the records of ancient, with the history of modern Italy. If, as authors of some of these monuments, there occur names of doubtful origin, or claimed by Greece;—Italians, more numerous, and equally illustrious, all previous to the conclusion of the twelfth century, prove, that even thus early, their countrymen were not inferior in art to the subjects of the Byzantine emperors[1]. Dur-

[1] Of these early artists may be mentioned the names

ing the period of the Crusades, indeed, the Latins who resorted to that court, have been stigmatised by female petulance, and by the arrogance of vain sophists, as barbarians, whose very names would contaminate the "beauty of history [1]." But in the unprejudiced estimation of the neighbouring nations, the Italians, at this time, were respected as a polished and martial people, alike renowned for their desire of knowledge, and their love of liberty. Nor is it necessary to have recourse to collateral arguments. The practice of sculpture is authenticated by monuments still existing; and from the

of Bonani, Diotisalvi, Antelami, Beduini, Gramonti, Viligelmi, &c.

[1] Anna Comnena is the lady referred to in the text. See Alexias apud Script. Byzant., vol. xi. pp. 224-37. Nicetas Choniatus, Script. Byz., vol. iii. p. 300, &c. is still more severe. In fact, all the Greek writers of this, and succeeding periods, affect an air of superiority. The Greeks were in that state when indolent luxury and effeminacy are mistaken for refinement. For a very opposite character, see the cotemporary writer, Jacobus de Vitriaco, a Frenchman, Histor. Hierosol., vol. ii. sub fin.

manufactures which early formed lucrative branches of commerce in the free states of Italy, there is reason to believe, that the other arts were not neglected. Mosaic, for instance, so closely united with, or rather dependent on the arts of design,—from its first introduction in the time of Sylla, to the age of Nicholas of Pisa, exercised in Italy, and by Italian artists, can distinctly be traced.

When, after a long interval, light began to break on the darkness of Western Europe, Italy had already emerged from the gloom. In the maxims of political wisdom,—in just notions of civil liberty,—in the knowledge of trade and commerce,—in the practice of the mechanical and liberal arts, she preceded Germany—France—England, by several centuries. Whence originated this priority in the career of improvement, save from a less degree of previous barbarism? To assume any other as a principal cause, only removes the difficulty one step. She thus started in the course from vantage ground;—her mental

horizon had still faintly glowed with the departing ray, when to surrounding nations, the sun of science had long set. Nor was this a reflected or borrowed splendour. We have seen that in rearing the most ancient monuments of modern art, Italians were employed; and it would be easy to shew, that in those of the same age in the East, they were not excelled [1]. Whatever, therefore, might have been the numbers of Byzantine artists, who at different periods

[1] The arts in the eastern empire suffered a rapid declension. In the ninth century, a monk of the Greek church could represent on the palace-walls of a Bulgarian prince, the tortures of the damned with such horrible fidelity and force, that what his preaching could not effect, his pencil produced,—the conversion of the barbarian to Christianity. In the thirteenth century, the Greek painters could just trace a feeble outline, somewhat resembling the human form, "with," to use Vasari's words, "staring eyes, like one possessed, open hands, and standing on tiptoe." "Con occhi spiritati, e mani aperte, in punta di piedi." Proem. della Parte i. delle Vite, &c. Vita di Cimabue, Le Brun, Hist. du Bas Empire. Remains of eastern art of this period, are to be found in Italy, in a most wretched taste.

resorted to Italy, they only assisted, without surpassing, indigenous talent. That, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, more books and more learning were included within the walls of Constantinople, than could be found in the cities of the West, may be admitted or denied [1]; but assuredly the country which could then boast the names of Dante,—of Petrarch,—of Boccacio [2], stood high in the scale of intellectual refinement, and in the honours of native genius could fear no competition of her eastern rival. Still more to our present purpose, a greater number of ingenious people, and more useful industry, animated the Italian republics of this era, than were contained within the pale of the Byzantine empire [3]. At a more recent

[1] Mosheim, Instit. Histor. Eccles. Of the fact of the books, there can be little question: the learning admits of a doubt.

[2] The first was born in 1265—died in 1321;—the second in 1304—1374; and the third in 1313—1376.

[3] Gibbon, Decline and Fall, &c. vol. xii. cap. 66. p. 118. 8vo edit.

period, far from requiring the aid of foreign science, Italy was adorned with the noblest edifices,—the erections of her own opulence and arts; and her free cities could exhibit productions,—unequalled in the capital of the East. When the fall of the latter forced the most enlightened and accomplished of her sons to seek asylums in a foreign land, in Italy they disseminated no new or useful acquirement,—save the knowledge of their glorious tongue. Their misfortunes were so far from advancing the progress of western art, that some of its happiest efforts were already accomplished. Brunelleschi had reared, on the banks of the Arno, the cupola of Saint Mary's [1]. Ghiberti had cast his "celestial doors;" and a future path was thus opened to still mightier names, while the walls of Constantinople stood yet inviolate by the Moslem.

It thus remains to explain, on a more tenable principle than occasional accessions

[1] The Cathedral of Florence is so called.

of Greek artists, the very visible improvement, which in the course of the twelfth century is to be observed in Italian art. Revolutions which permanently affect the habits or character of a people, can be produced by great internal changes only. For such, then, we must search in the present instance.

When the nations that had subdued the western empire, were fixed in their new settlements, their ignorance might have been enlightened by the superior refinement of the conquered, while they grafted their own energetic virtues on the degenerate natives. Unfortunately for this mutual amelioration, throughout the whole extent of their conquests, with uniformity truly surprising, a species of government was established, than which, no institution could be more opposed to individual happiness, or to general improvement [1]. The feudal sys-

[1] The uniformity with which the system of feudality obtained over Europe, has induced some authors to consider the invaders of the Roman empire as originally one people. Robertson, with greater propriety, as-

tem, by recognising a series of tyrants instead of one sovereign, and one code of law—by appropriating every honourable distinction, or desirable acquisition, to one class—by fixing human condition in the right of oppressing, or in the servility of suffering;—destroyed all community of sentiment,—and by extinguishing hope, removed the motives to exertion. Where deeds of violence, and lawless power reigned,—the peaceful arts, which court secure, and refined leisure gradually expired. In Italy they longest lingered; but a vital change could alone rescue their feeble light from utter extinction. Accordingly, when, by various means of prudence, bravery, usurpation, or purchase, about the commencement of the eleventh century,—the cities of Florence, Pisa, Bologna, Siena, in the centre, and Venice and Amalphi at the opposite extremities of the Italian peninsula, threw off their

cribes it to the similar state of society and manners, in which they had previously lived.—Char. V. vol. i. *sub init.*

feudal dependence, and proclaimed themselves free;—the arts appeared among the earliest attendants in the train of liberty. Amid the surrounding waste of slavery and of despotism, so many spots of freshness and security thus arose, where the blossoms of freedom, if not reared with tender, were, at least, guarded with jealous and effective care,—where the oppressed found protection, and the persecuted repose—where merit secured respect,—and talent obtained honour. In the free cities, therefore, was quickly assembled, all that Italy could boast of aspiring, intrepid or enlightened [1].

[1] For interesting accounts of the rise, progress, and privileges of the Italian republics, see the native historians, Guicciardini, Machiavelli, and Muratori Antiq. Ital. Also Sismondi, who, if he has added little of novelty, gives an admirable synoptical view of the subject. Robertson, Char. V. vol. i., gives several particulars. The "communities" of other countries are carefully to be distinguished from the "free cities" of Italy; the former, indeed, possessed many of the privileges of the latter; but the sovereignty resided in the king, not in the municipality. See Hume's History of England, Gilbert's History of the Exchequer, &c.

The moral history of these republics, indeed, presents an agreeable and brilliant contrast to their political annals. The latter exhibit a fearful picture of the consequences of liberty when ill understood, and of every evil attendant on the turbulence, vacillation, and licentiousness of popular authority. In the former are beautifully elucidated the effects of those generous, and dignified principles of government, which originate in the heart, and disposition of man, not in artificial systems; —which, by interesting the noblest feelings in defence of the dearest rights, form the glorious distinction of free states, and the best security of small ones. As one of these moral causes, the efficacy of the arts in ministering to patriotism and to national glory, among a discerning and free people, could not remain long undiscovered.

In these republics, the arts, as objects of general concern, were first consecrated to the service of religion, while they added not less to the embellishment of each independent capital. They were next exer-

cised in public works, where utility was also combined with magnificence:—And, finally, the productions of painting, and of sculpture more particularly, were employed as commemorative of celebrated events, and as marks of the highest honours a grateful country could bestow. While his acquirements were thus important, the artist was respected as an ornament and a benefactor to his native city. Again, these cities had attained, as they could only hope to support their independence,—by commerce. In this respect, ingenuity in the arts offered a never-failing resource. Even before the era of liberty, they had thus been in some degree practised, nor was foreign aid required to revive what had never been extinct. Great occasions create great men; and the magnificent works, which quickly followed the possession of liberty, found conductors in those, whose powers, circumstances had hitherto concealed. It is vain, then, to ascribe their sudden splendour to extrinsic causes, when the arts were thus cultivated from motives

of pious zeal,—of national pride,—of personal ambition; when they were regarded as sources of general prosperity,—and as cherishing patriotic enthusiasm.

Among the republics of Italy, Venice was the earliest in fully establishing liberty. Pisa, however, took the lead in founding a school of native art; and early in the eleventh century, preparations were made for the building of her beautiful cathedral[1]. Their eastern commerce afforded to the persons a ready intercourse with Greece, whence they brought various remains of ancient art, relievos, capitals, and even numerous columns, which ornament this edifice. From the East, many artists likewise resorted to Pisa, a circumstance naturally to be expected, when no certain employment could be procured in their own country, which was then suffering both from foreign war and domestic oppression. These were united in the labour with native

[1] Cicognara,—David,—the common guide books, and other works on Italy, date this event later.

workmen; but the incorrect reading of a sepulchral inscription, seems unjustly to have assigned to Greece, the honour of producing Boschetto, the principal architect[1]. This artist died at Pisa, where he founded a numerous school of architects and of sculptors.

Of the school of Boschetto, the most illustrious member was Nicolo da Pisa, a native of that city. This master was the glory of the twelfth century, and under him Italian art first assumes dignity and importance. He early perceived the remarkable difference between the fragments of Greek sculpture, and the productions of his master: the instructions of the latter were therefore abandoned, that undivided attention might be devoted to the study of the former. His most eminent pupils were his own son, Giovanni da Pisa, and two strangers,—Augustino, and Angelo da Siena, so called from the place of their birth, and who, with the former, were united in the construction of the cathedral in

[1] Ancient inscriptions at Pisa—Cicognara, tom. i. *sub init.*

their native city. With these, the science of their master did not languish; and in their school we first trace the separation of sculpture from architecture, each being subsequently considered as a distinct profession [1].

From the founding of the cathedral at Pisa [2], to the middle of the thirteenth century, the surrounding cities were gradually filled with skilful workmen, and splendid edifices. Of these, as well as of the minor works of art, in chapels, altars, tombs [3], fountains, statues, relievos,—the labours of

[1] This regulation was highly conducive to the advancement of sculpture. In Siena, about 1250, we find a confraternity of sculptors alone, consisting of sixty-one members, then employed on the cathedral. Their rules and regulations are still extant, from which it appears, that there were chosen, by popular election every six months, three rectors and a chamberlain.

[2] David, &c. Cicognara is somewhat partial to the greater antiquity of Venetian art.

[3] Of all the minor works of sculpture at this period, none were more numerous, or contributed more to the advancement of the art than tombs. These were generally of the form termed *Cataphalks*, borrowed from the custom of exposing the dead on beds of state, and

this period, the authors still live in the fond partiality of local antiquaries. In the brevity of a general outline, however, these names must be compendiously classed, as disciples, either immediately or remotely, of the school of Pisa.

The cities of ancient Etruria, the former seats of the arts and of freedom, were thus the first to hail their return. One alone, destined to eclipse the glory of all, still lingered in the twilight of ignorance, although amongst the earliest to proclaim the dawn of liberty. Florence, from the declaration of her independence about 1010, was so distracted by domestic feuds, that upwards of two centuries elapsed, before any conspicuous progress in the arts had been effected. To terminate these divisions, in 1250, thirty-eight persons were chosen by com-

which are not inferior to any afterwards invented, since they might be either isolated, or built into a wall, and admitted of almost every ornament which sculpture could bestow. The stiffness of a recumbent posture was perhaps less favourable to separate figures, than the whole was to relievos, &c. Of this species of tombs many masterpieces of the earliest school still remain.

mon consent, who established a constitution, to which their country chiefly owed its future greatness. And though it failed in immediately putting an end to faction, it has justly been regarded a most perfect model of democracy,—if that epithet may be applied to a species of government, which, under the best forms, is liable to so many objections. The citizens were divided into twelve separate and independent companies, governed each by a magistrate elected from the members, each possessed of peculiar and distinct privileges,—but all united, as regarded the political existence of the whole, by the most sacred ties of religion and of patriotism. The same individual, as head of a corporation, watched over the appropriate rights of his constituents,—and, as one of twelve compeers, represented in general council the majesty of the republic. The same banner was borne before each corporate body, in peaceful procession to its separate church;—and, as one of twelve standards, marshalled to the field the united band of patriots.

Florence thus contained within its own bosom, a second Greece,—another Italy, in the number of small but independent communities, whose mutual emulation has, in both countries, proved so favourable to the progress of the arts. At the same time, she possessed an advantage denied to both, in preserving that political union which constitutes the strength of great states. To this happy constitution is, in the first place, to be ascribed the splendour which Florentine art so rapidly attained [1].

Sculpture, indeed, did not at first meet with that encouragement which was bestowed on the sister art. About the middle of the thirteenth century, some Greek painters were employed in the churches of Florence, and the youthful Cimabue was so lost in admiration of their work, that whole days passed unheeded while he gazed. This devotion led to the practice of

[1] For these various particulars relative to the ancient customs and constitution of Florence, see Guicciardini, &c. and more particularly Machiavelli, Hist. Fior. lib. ii.

the art, and his masters were quickly surpassed. He was in turn excelled by Giotto, his own pupil, whom he found a shepherd boy in the vallies of Tuscany, beguiling the languor of solitude, by attempting to delineate on a stone the figures of his sheep.

The performances of these artists had excited the highest approbation, and obtained the most splendid rewards, while the art, in which her citizens afterwards became so famous, was yet without a school in Florence [1]. Andrea da Pisa, the grandson of Nicolo, about the commencement of the fourteenth century, was invited to

[1] Cimabue was born in 1240, and died at the age of sixty; Giotto was thirty-six years younger than his master, and died in 1336. The circumstance of the former having been instructed by certain obscure Greek artists, who happened then to be at Florence, seems to have misled Vasari, who appears to have applied what was peculiar to one art and one individual as common to all. Yet Cimabue might have been taught painting by his countrymen. A picture of the Virgin by this artist, was carried in solemn and triumphant procession from his own house to the church for which it was intended. Giotto had a fixed salary of 100 gold florins. By such honours Florence formed her artists.

leave his native city, and thus became the father of Tuscan sculpture. Andrea possessed extensive and varied attainments; he was a tolerable painter, an excellent sculptor, and a skilful founder. He likewise commenced his career under several advantages; his predecessors had left him great examples to follow; the reputation of his cotemporaries, Dante,—Giotto,—Memmi, excited emulation and cherished hope; while in the best means of arriving at superiority, recent discoveries of classic remains had furnished models of art hitherto unknown [1]. The works of this sculptor are numerous in Florence; but his fame is chiefly maintained, or even increased, by the relievos of the Campanile [2], and by the bronze-folding doors of the Baptistery.

[1] Of Andrea's attention to these ancient statues, the group of the Virgin and Child, still to be seen in the church named *Bigallo*, exhibits an instance. This work is justly praised by Vasari, "per aver egli, in essa imitato la buona maniera anticha," as imitating the manner of antiquity.

[2] Or belfry of the Cathedral, of which Charles V. used to say, that it ought to be kept in a case like

Tomasso and Nino, sons and pupils of Andrea, sustained the reputation of their instructor; while, by the disciples of this school, previous to the conclusion of the century, the knowledge and practice of the art were widely disseminated over Lombardy, and other parts of Italy. Of these early masters, the names and works are chiefly preserved in the edifices of Milan, and the Chartreuse of Pavia. The beautiful utensils and ornaments of the church, also, both in the precious ores, and in baser materials, —the splendid arms and panoply of the warrior, furnished, at this period, ample opportunities of exercising ingenuity,—gradually refining a mechanic occupation into a branch of exquisite art. In these labours were now educated in the workshops of Florence, many of the greatest artists, whose talents shed lustre on the succeeding age.

The school of Pisa is thus to be considered the primitive, and genuine source of

some precious trinket. This *trinket* is not much above 200 feet high.

modern art. From this origin, in the space of little more than three centuries, we trace its gradual diffusion over a considerable portion of Italy, and more particularly its firm establishment in the capital of Tuscany. Notwithstanding the claims which, in this respect, have been urged in favour of Venice, she long continues to form merely an episode in the general history; and only as a supporter of liberty, or, by occasionally employing foreign artists, did she influence the progress of sculpture. Thus, in 979, architects were brought from Constantinople, to construct, or rather to rebuild St Marks, who were again dismissed, apparently without any endeavours to found a seminary of native art. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, on the contrary, sculptors were brought from Pisa and from Florence. The grand political and moral causes, which operated so powerfully in other states, were comparatively feeble in their effects at Venice. Her proud and wealthy aristocracy converted the arts, rather to the purposes of private

magnificence, than employed them as means of national grandeur. It was this union of the arts with national feeling, while the ardour of newly acquired liberty gave to that sentiment extraordinary energy and vigour, which so eminently conduced to their progress in Italy. Seconded by the emulation of different states,—by the competition of numerous schools,—by the greater abundance of excellent models, this national enthusiasm enabled her free cities to advance, at least two centuries, in the acquisition of pure and elegant art, before the rest of Europe had started in the career.

The ages which have now passed in review, may be termed the infancy of the art, whilst sculpture was, in some measure, still subordinate to architecture. The gigantic undertakings in the latter, which distinguish this period,—the edifices of Pisa, of Siena, of Orvieto, of Florence, of Venice, of Milan, furnished an extensive field for the practice, and, indeed, chiefly tended to the advancement of the former. It is curious, however, to observe the dissimilar improvement, which, in the same age, and

in the same building, these arts respectively exhibit. In the architecture of these fabrics there is little of elegance, purity, or simplicity of taste, while the sculptures with which they are ornamented display in those respects very perceptible approximations towards excellence. The beauty which is dependent on the harmony, proportions, and arrangement of imaginary forms, is doubtless of a more abstract species, than that which arises from truth of imitation, where the exemplars are to be found in living nature. Hence, perhaps, the same men, whose refinement was capable of appreciating the merits of Grecian sculpture, overlooked the simple majesty of ancient architecture.

From the time of Nicholas of Pisa, whose ideas are frequently drawn from antiquity[1],

[1] Nicholas was not satisfied with the fragments imported by his countrymen: his eager desire of improvement prompted him to visit the remains which were elsewhere to be seen; and the resemblance between some of his works and monuments known then to have existed at Rome, whither it is certain he travelled, incontestably proves imitation.

a general character of simplicity,—of fidelity,—of just expression, pervades sculpture. The mind is never astonished by boldness of execution, or grandeur of conception; but the great efforts of the art being dedicated to religion, or to the memory of the dead, there is often an air of devotional sincerity—a touching representation of the gentler affections, which soften the heart, and awaken the sensibility. Nothing is ever daringly ventured;—the effect is sought to be produced by force of labour—by persevering discovery, rather than by following any acknowledged principles of taste, or rules of composition. But if the creative faculties have seldom been conspicuously exerted, we are sometimes surprised by unexpected beauties, arising from a diligent imitation of nature, which give back the image of the original in all its simple reality, and excite the same sensations, which more refined art only boasts of producing, by nobler and more unerring precepts.

Of this period, the principal works are

relievos; statues are comparatively few in number, and generally inferior in excellence,—a natural consequence, where difficulties are multiplied, while knowledge continues circumscribed. The former are to be considered among those performances and discoveries of one age, which immediately conduct to the improvements and superiority of the succeeding. Thus, the relievos on the shrine of St Dominic—on the pulpits of Pisa and of Siena,—those on the cathedral of Orvieto,—the monuments of the Tarlati—of the Scaligers, and other sepulchral erections,—the decorations of St Mark's, and of the Ducal Palace,—the sculptures of the belfry of St Mary's, and, above all, the doors of the Baptistery, constitute the intermediate gradations between the barbarism of the dark ages, and the more perfect productions of the two following centuries.

There are epochs in the annals of the human mind, when its powers appear as if multiplied, or increased by the variety and the diversity of its exertions. Of these the

fifteenth century presents a splendid instance. Advances in moral, intellectual, and political knowledge were then effected;—as also in the arts of utility and of elegance, which subsequent discoveries, however brilliant or useful, never can efface. In the history of sculpture, especially, the artists who then flourished will ever hold a distinguished rank. During this period, among the citizens of the Italian republics, two ruling passions may be discovered,—love of national independence, and admiration of the arts. The almost continual wars carried on at this time, evince the ardour with which they maintained the one,—while the dangers and difficulties of military operations did not prevent them from paying every attention to the cultivation of the other. The energies of a free people seem, indeed, to acquire fresh vigour from opposition to the dangers which menace their liberty; and, amid such struggles, the most glorious efforts, both in arts and in arms, have been displayed. The same jealousy of a supe-

rior, also, which animated the political world, appeared to pervade the empire of taste. There existed throughout this century an aristocracy of talent;—and, as if genius had been the common birthright of many, no single master so far excelled his cotemporaries, as to impress upon the age the stamp and character of an individual mind. Of this general equality, the first occurrence in the history of sculpture furnishes a striking proof, at the same time assisting in the selection of those names, which, during this period, most directly influenced the progress of the art.

In the year 1400, the magistrates of Florence resolved to ornament the two remaining entrances to the Baptistery with gates of bronze, similar in design to those which had before, by Andrea da Pisa, been prepared for the third: They accordingly invited a competition of the most celebrated artists, by publicly announcing their intention in every principality of Italy. Of the artists who, on the day appointed, assembled in great numbers, six were immediate-

ly acknowledged to surpass the rest in general estimation, though of doubtful superiority as compared with each other. Of the candidates thus selected, Brunelleschi and Ghiberti were Florentines; Jacomo della Quercia of Siena, Nicolo Lamberti of Arezzo, Francisco di Valdambrino, were Tuscans; and Simone dei Colli was from Lombardy. On the expiration of a year, during which they were maintained at the expense of the state, each was required to produce a complete pannel, finished in the proper style, and of the just dimensions, as required in the future work [1].

[1] In the text, the unedited manuscripts of Ghiberti himself have been followed in preference to the narrative of Vasari, who says that there were seven competitors, to the names above, adding that of Donatello. This latter, however, was certainly not a competitor, since he was born in 1383, and, consequently, at the early age of sixteen or seventeen, could not possibly be ranked among the most celebrated artists of Italy. In the Commentaries of Ghiberti, a manuscript, in his own handwriting, and still to be seen in the ducal library at Florence, we indeed find the competitors amount to seven, the name of Nicolo d'Arezzo being

The time for examining these performances being arrived, a second assembly of artists was convened at Florence, when thirty-eight of the most accomplished were

added to those in the text. But he himself says, in some previous remarks, that " they were six who made this trial;"—" Fummo sei a fare detta pruova la quale pruova era demonstrazione di gran parte dell' arte statuaria." Here, then, there is considerable difficulty; but Baldinucci furnishes an explanation, by informing us that Nicolo di Arezzo and Nicolo Lamberti are but two names for the same individual. N. di Pietro Aretino scultore, non è diverso da N. di Pia Lamberti, o di Lamberti, cittadino di Arezzo e scultore, il quale operi in Firenza nel 1396 e nel 1422. Baldin. Vita del Scult. tom. i. p. 312. Ghiberti, therefore, in the hurry of writing, put down the same person under both his names; and Vasari, who transcribes almost verbatim from the " Commentario," aware of this mistake, inserted, on his own authority, the name of Donatello. He has also thrown an air of romantic generosity over the conclusion of the contest, not indeed inconsistent with the high strain of feeling and of sentiment in that extraordinary period, but which rests only on his own authority. See Vasari Vita di Donatello e Brunellesci,—Cicognara Stor. del Scult.—David. Recherches sur l'Art Stat., &c., who details the story from Vasari, seemingly entirely ignorant of his mistake.

requested to act as judges. The competitors having wrought in secret, and apart from each other, the pannels were now first exposed, representing, in mixed relief, the Sacrifice of Abraham,—a subject prescribed, as well calculated to elicit their utmost skill, including both draped and naked figures, and animals. This was a spectacle worthy of the happiest ages of ancient Greece:—the magistrates in their robes presided;—the assembled citizens stood around;—and the judges discussed aloud, in presence of all, the respective merits of the rival productions. It is by such national and unbiassed patronage that the arts are cherished. The countenance of individuals may foster a succession of artists,—but, that art may advance, its interests must become the care of the state. The most glorious meed of genius, which excites in rewarding, is the applause of a free and generous people.

After long deliberation, conducted with the most impartial scrutiny, Lorenzo Ghiberti, a youth of twenty-three years, was

declared to have surpassed the skill and elegance of his opponents. The work thus honourably assigned to his superior merits, formed the constant labour of forty years of his life, and still remains one of the noblest monuments of modern art [1]. In this production, however, as compared with the earlier performance of the Pisan artist, we do not perceive such conspicuous anticipation of knowledge or of taste unknown to the age, nor is there attained so marked an elevation above immediate predecessors. Art, in its general progress, experiences the fate of individual genius. To a certain era in refinement the progressions are rapid; —but as advances towards perfection are

[1] These were afterwards declared by Michael Angelo, "worthy to be the gates of paradise." The exertions of Ghiberti were most nobly rewarded by his fellow-citizens. He was paid not only whatever he demanded, but received a grant of land in addition, and was elected Gonfaloniere, or chief magistrate of the state. After his death, his bust, and that of his father, who had been his master, were placed in the Baptistery. He was like many of the sculptors of this period bred a goldsmith. He died in 1455, aged 77.

accomplished, improvement gradually becomes more slow, or less obvious, as its objects are exalted;—the ascending gradations are rendered less and less apparent, by their proximity to the summit of that refined excellence, the conception of which distinguishes the highest order of intellect—which inspires the brightest visions of fancy;—but must ever remain the despair of practice!

Of the other competitors with Ghiberti, the most celebrated was Brunelleschi, who, in his youth, discovered talents for sculpture, which would have rendered him the most eminent artist of the age; but his attention being afterwards directed to architecture, the constructor of that wondrous cupola, the first which modern art produced, ceases to interest on the present occasion. The remaining four, by their works in bronze and in marble, by the number and the merits of their scholars, maintained their own reputation, while they widely disseminated and improved the art.

Among so many illustrious cotempora-

ries, the name of Donatello challenges conspicuous notice, from the variety, the magnitude, and the excellence of his labours, —which, in every material capable of receiving the impress of his chisel, and dispersed throughout Italy, in Florence, in Rome, in Naples, in Venice, in Padua, still fix the admiration of the traveller. Of his works in the first-mentioned city, the statues of St George, of Magdalen Penitent, of St John, may be instanced as examples of nobleness of form and grandeur of expression, united with simplicity of composition, and truth of imitation; while at the last, the equestrian statue of Erasmo di Narni claims attention, as the first attempt in modern times. But the greatness of his genius is chiefly remarkable in the purity and beauty of his relievos,—a department of the art which, during the fifteenth century, attained a degree of perfection unsurpassed in any succeeding age.

The scholars of Donatello may be divided into two great classes. The first comprehends those who, without producing any

originals of their own, have attained reputation, from assisting as co-labourers in the most considerable undertakings of their master. Among these may be reckoned, Simon his brother, Giovanni di Pisa the second of the name, Bartoldo di Firenza, Vellamo di Padua, and perhaps others.—The second division includes the true disciples of Donatello, who, without servilely following in his train, preserved the integrity of his precepts, and imbibed the genuine principles of their instructor. Among the most celebrated of these pupils, Michelozzi, Titarete, Settignano, and the two Russilini may be enumerated [1].

[1] Of Titarete it was said, that his audacity would have attempted to rebuild the world, and his vanity would have led him to believe he could have embellished it. Settignano died early,—he promised to be the Correggio of sculpture—so lovely—so graceful are his forms. The elder Russilino is sometimes celebrated as the first architect of St Peter's under Nicholas V. To these names may be added that of Cividale, artist of the tomb of Nocetta, esteemed one of the most perfect monuments of its kind. The two Russilini and Cividale entered late into the school of Donatello, and were successors, rather than pupils.

Nor in Tuscany alone was sculpture cultivated with distinguished success. In Bologna, in Modena, and also over the whole of Lombardy, even in its remotest parts, at Como, and at Campione, we find eminent artists. In Naples, Donatello had left many works, and the taste which these inspired was fostered by native talent. The two Massicj, Monaco, Cicione, Fiore, may be mentioned with applause among those who in this extremity of Italy maintained the increasing splendour of the art. In the states of Venice were numerous sculptors, scions also of the Florentine school; but, as regards the excellence of their productions, a native historianmay be allowed to affirm, without being charged with great national partiality, that " they rivalled the parent seminary." Of these the names of Riccio, the Venetian Lysippus, of Cavino, of Camelio, of Leopardi, may be selected from the crowd. It is to be regretted that the most valued productions of this period suffered irreparable injury, while the excesses of the French revolution were but too

faithfully imitated at Venice. The use, if not the beauty of sepulchral and religious monuments, ought to have preserved them from violation; nor is their loss the less to be deplored, that such specimens of early art present the best means of tracing its progress; for piety or ostentation thus provide, in each succeeding age, a series of performances, in which is embodied the living refinement of the time.

If the attention be once more directed to Florence, many eminent artists are discovered, whose labours close this century. Luca della Robbia, in his manner bold and vigorous,—the Majani, conspicuous in sculpture and in mosaic—Andrea Verocchio, enjoying high reputation, both by his works and by his scholars,—the Pallajoli, painters and sculptors, chiefly instrumental in introducing boldness of design and anatomical science. Among the pupils of the preceding, or in the academy established by the Medici, are to be found Michael Angelo and many of his illustrious compeers, who adorned the sixteenth century,

on the confines of which we have thus arrived.

From the Alps to the Appenines,—from the latter to the shores of Calabria, sculpture was thus cultivated with success, while, in the other states of Europe, the arts still slumbered, or had made advances too unimportant to merit, in a general survey, particular examination. In Italy, during the century which has just elapsed, Florence continued the central point of refinement; and, in the works of her artists, is to be observed a more obvious development of principles, united with a greater freedom of execution, than appears in the performances of more remote art. In the Florentine schools, for the space of almost seventy years [1], Ghiberti and Donatello presided;—nor has the lapse of successive centuries exhausted the admiration which their works first inspired. To these masters, therefore, the attention is strongly di-

[1] Donatello survived his rival Ghiberti about eleven years, and died in 1466, aged 83. His master is unknown.

rected, who are found to excel—each in a different department. Both are most esteemed in relievos; and the former in high, —the latter in low relief, produced models that have never been surpassed. The influence of Donatello, however, on the art universally, was more direct and extensive than that of Ghiberti; but the talents of neither claim such exclusive pre-eminence, as to obscure the merits of cotemporaries, or of immediate successors. The progress of sculpture, during this century, was the result rather of general improvement, than the effect of individual superiority. It has thus been the singular fate of the eminent sculptors of this period, to have produced models in those that followed, while they have continued models themselves,—and to have remained originals, in an age of originality.

As regards the style and character of art, both are, in a high degree, elevated as well as pleasing. A refined and modest simplicity, equally remote from affectation or poverty, reigns in every production of the

chisel. The artist never appears solicitous, by a display of his skill, to excite surprise, or to attract admiration, but seems anxious to express nature with fidelity, and by the simplest means. The manner of representation never allures attention from the object represented; and the work is often long admired, before it occurs to inquire how the fascination is produced. The execution is distinguished by extreme minuteness and delicacy, but frequently betrays a deficiency in boldness and energy[1]:—a slight portion of restraint is still apparent;—a certain timidity, verging, however, on a beauty, as it evidently proceeds from a too rigid adherence to nature, nor ill accords with a manner correct, yet unostentatious. Between the powers of imagination, and of execution, there exists a noble harmony;—we discover neither that ina-

[1] The greater proportion of works, during the fifteenth century, was in bronze,—a material which certainly favoured the acquisition of a delicate and high finished style, but it may be questioned whether it be not opposed to boldness and vigour.

dequacy of practice which marks the infancy of art, nor that superiority of manual dexterity over original invention, which notes the decline of taste. In the more intellectual part, the most chaste and elegant design,—judicious and unaffected composition characterise, in general, the works of this period. Sweet and dignified expression, more than sublimity or grandeur of mental affection, is sought to be obtained. The powers of fancy are never presumed upon, and seldom roused:—the heart is interested, but the senses are not surprised. We do not observe any decided attempts to create an expression of general or abstract beauty; but the mind of the artist, now no longer wholly occupied in mechanical detail, or almost overpowered by the difficulties of mere representation,—the taste and the imagination are allowed to expatiate—to select—to combine. If the forms and manners are not invested with ideal elevation,—we at least trace a successful endeavour to imitate the most perfect models of real existence. In short,

were the extent or object of art confined to the imitation of actual nature, the sculpture of the fifteenth century would often verge on perfection. By the genius of the sixteenth, greater ease and grace of execution,—more forceful and exalted expression,—more refined selection of form,—and more of imaginative excellence, still remained to be added.

CHAPTER II.

Sculpture during the sixteenth century—Michael Angelo—Character of his genius and works — The Moses—Monuments of the Medici—Scholars and cotemporaries of Michael Angelo—Venetian, Neapolitan, and Lombard schools during this century —Sculpture in France—Italian art at the commencement of the seventeenth century—Bernini—Character of his style — Algardi—Il Fiammingo—Eighteenth century—Rusconi and his cotemporaries—French sculptors—Gerardon—Puget—Bonchardon —Pigal—Sculpture in Germany—Spain—England —General reflections—Conclusion.

The opening of the sixteenth century discloses a moral and political disposition of things, highly favourable to the future advancement of the arts in Italy. Refinement in matters of taste had become common;—literature and erudition being esteemed, were profoundly studied;—the chief cities enjoyed freedom, united with opulence;—in the other states, the princes

and nobles, though warlike, were yet attached to elegant splendour, and emulous in patronising ingenious men,—while, still more important, great energy and activity pervaded the general body of the people. The influence of these causes on sculpture individually, was rendered peculiarly effective by the advanced condition of the latter. To the cultivation of the fine arts at Rome also, there deemed hitherto an object of very secondary importance, the immense resources of the church, and the attention of several of the most enterprising among the papal sovereigns, were from this period sedulously devoted. It was not the generous enthusiasm produced by liberty, nor the elevated views of national glory, nor the refined love of elegance, which operated in producing this revolution. Universal sway had ever formed the darling ambition of the Holy See. To maintain this dominion, spiritual weapons and temporal power had formerly been employed with success;—the progress of knowledge was now rapidly diminishing

the force of both,—and means more congenial to the spirit of the times had become necessary. It was therefore resolved to constitute this city the metropolis at once of religion and of art,—to include within its walls relics the most precious in the eye of devotion, and monuments the most valued in the estimation of taste. Hence the origin of those vast schemes for the aggrandisement of Rome, which have ever since rendered that capital the principal seat of the arts, and which, from the commencement of this epoch, gave birth to undertakings the most splendid in modern times.

External events were thus highly propitious, while these advantages were now seconded by one of the most extraordinary men in the annals of intellectual greatness,—who, for more than sixty years of this century, reigned paramount in the realms of art. We have now attained the central elevation in the history of modern sculpture, to which an ascent, progressive, though gradual, has been traced, and from which, in like manner, a decline, but more

rapid, will be perceived. On this summit is seated, in distant superiority—in unshared and awful solitude, the towering genius of Michael Angelo. By this great artist, then, the attention is first and chiefly arrested, while, from an examination of his works, the most correct views of the state of sculpture, during this important era, will be obtained. To the name of Buonaroti, however, a fictitious reputation is attached,—fictitious, at least, as respects his several merits, which, as hitherto remaining undefined, has prevented a just appreciation of his character, in its different bearings on the arts.

When the attainments of Michael Angelo are collectively considered; when in the same individual is discovered—the architect of the Cupola—the painter of the Last Judgment—the sculptor of the Moses, discriminative qualities are lost in unlimited admiration; and to him who thus bears away the palm of universal genius, we are inclined to concede the foremost rank in every pursuit. Accordingly, by

his admirers, this general superiority, which is maintained only by indivision, has been successively transferred to each separate department. Hence, as a sculptor, most particularly, the fame of this artist exceeds the absolute beauty of his labours, and the value of his improvements. In sculpture, the same advancement which he effected in painting was impossible; under his hand the latter suddenly rose from poverty and meanness, to sublimity, strength, boldness, and scientific correctness [1]; in the former an excellence had already been attained, to which little remained to be added; nor are the subsequent additions always desirable.

When Michael Angelo appeared, the age was generally unacquainted with a style of art different from that of the fifteenth century. Estimated by this criterion, and at a period in refinement, when the forcible and the imaginative possess greater charms than the simple and the true, his works, in the partial admiration

[1] In the previous works of Mussaccio alone are to be discovered indications of a noble and elevated style.

of the time, appeared to exhibit excellencies that marked the utmost limits of sculpture. They were accordingly erected into a standard, by which earlier masters were to be valued, and to which future artists were to aspire. The cotemporaries, as also the successors of this great man, were thus constrained to become imitators, and, in public estimation, necessarily remained inferiors, while, in comparison with these alone, did his merits long continue to be appreciated.

That genius is exalted by denying regularity to its operations,—by refusing stability to the modes of judging its productions,—by asserting the inefficacy of rules in aiding its exertions, are ideas not uncommon, and which, as sources of exaggerated reputation, have, in the present instance, operated with no inconsiderable influence. The powers of Michael Angelo, it is frequently maintained, are too original—too exclusive—too mighty for subjection to other laws, than those deducible from the effects of his own works; and to

apply, in the examination of these, the common principles of criticism, has been viewed as an attempt to fetter a giant in the airy films of the gossamer. By what standard, it is inquired, are we to estimate; to what rules are we to subject the most sublime,—yet the most daring of modern artists; who hovers on the confines of possible existence,—in whose labours, like contending light and darkness, grandeur and extravagance are often blended? To be judged correctly, it is argued, he must not be removed out of his own age, and own manner; as if all former art had consisted of barbarous efforts, without beauty or science; as if he had established both, and therefore not obnoxious to precepts of which he was ignorant. Yet few great names have been more indebted to the labours of predecessors. The sculptor of the Moses never could have produced that statue, had he not studied the performances of Donatello; even Brunelleschi had taught him to realise the lofty boast of rearing the dome of the Pantheon to the skies; nay more,

Michael Angelo was intimately conversant with some of the chief productions of classic art [1]. On what grounds, then, can his admirers demand for this artist those privileges, which Homer, Shakespeare, or others who like them have lived in the dawn of refinement, and in ignorance of more perfect models, can alone justly claim? Why should an exclusive originality, or a peculiar system of critical remark, be arrogated, when few important principles were previously unknown, and when, in the labours of preceding masters, are to be found examples of excellence yet unsurpassed?

Such are the principal causes of an adventitious fame, which, as gradually dispelled by time, has left in Michael Angelo, the instance of a name intrinsically great, whose reputation has not progressively advanced.

[1] A few of the finest specimens of ancient sculpture had been discovered even during the early part of his life, which, shut up in palaces and villas, though they could not exert an influence on the public taste, served at least as models to artists.

Carefully excluding this unreal eminence, then, it will be necessary to ascertain, in examining his works, certain permanent principles of judgment. In the fine arts, as in all pursuits which aspire to moral dignity, truth is the criterion of beauty; and in these the objects of truth are two,—resemblance and consistency. The former respects the relation subsisting between the representation and its prototype,—the latter regards the agreement of the several parts of a composition with each other, and with the peculiar mode of imitation to which it belongs; in the first case, art is compared with nature, in the second, with itself. In matters of taste, the practice of antiquity also claims a twofold authority,—resting on the intrinsic excellence of the examples that have reached our times, — and on the prescriptive influence of opinions long established, of associations universally understood. An authority thus neither local nor temporary, operates as a precept of immutable taste, as a sentiment of general feeling; in those arts which must blend de-

light with instruction, it consequently assumes the certainty and the importance of truth [1].

Estimated by these principles, the works of Michael Angelo discover much that is derived from the noble and graceful forms of exalted nature,—still more which arises from the peculiarities of an individual imagination: They rarely exhibit the beautiful simplicity and repose essential to the character of an art, grave, dignified, or even austere, and possessing means comparatively limited and uniform; but they frequently present limbs artificially contrasted, attitudes forced and constrained, proportions exaggerated, and expressions unnatural. At the same time, these qualities are always redeemed by a force, an energy, an enthusiasm, which give a seeming vitality

[1] See Reynolds' excellent Discourse "On the Standard of Taste." Sculpture is so peculiarly an art belonging to antiquity, that it may be justly questioned how far the slightest deviations from its established practices, in the inventions of modern artists, is warranted by judicious improvement, or pleasing effect.

to every composition, resembling rather the effect of inspiration, than produced by reiterated or laborious efforts. In reference to these respective manners, also, two gradations are easily recognisable; the earlier performances of the artist, retaining all the truth and simplicity of the fifteenth century, while they unite to these beauties greater powers of execution, and more animated expression;—his latter and more important labours, on the contrary, present, in their full vigour, those peculiar characteristics which especially constitute the style of this school. Of the former manner, the Bacchus in the Florentine gallery—the *Pietà* of St Peter's, as the group of the Virgin and dead Saviour is usually termed,—the Colossal David, notwithstanding its want of just proportion, are examples; of the latter, the personification of victory, as a youth chaining a captive, may be regarded as the first decided instance [1]. This being the style which impressed its spirit, both on cotemporary and

[1] This statue of victory, now in the Council Chamber of the *old* Ducal Palace of the Medici at Florence,

on succeeding art, most particularly demands attention, while distinctive excellencies and defects, either in composition or in execution, will be best illustrated by the analysis of individual productions.

Amid the creations of genius, the Moses of Michael Angelo rises a solitary and matchless monument. Without model among the works of ancient masters, it has remained inimitable and unimitated by modern artists. The original conception of an extraordinary mind, it would be equally vain to expect its prototype in nature. Thus isolated by its own peculiar sublimity of character, this statue presents a striking resemblance to the imagination from which it derived existence, exhibiting a faithful transcript of the mental beauties

remains still unfinished. On ascending the pedestal, in order to a closer examination, the author discovered on the back and shoulders, lines in red chalk, as originally drawn by the hand of Michael Angelo himself, on those parts which he intended to retouch; the effect of such an incident may be better conceived than described.

and blemishes of its author. The prophet, seated on the fragment of a rock, his right arm resting on the tablet of the law, is represented at the moment, when descending from the mount, the first distant prospect of the idolatrous camp has opened on his view; but his, though the posture, is not the state of repose. A restless and impatient action, perturbation and solicitude, pervade the whole figure; while a character of intellectual and stern grandeur, of moral fierceness, of haughty and unrelenting independence, breathes—lives in the marble, and almost overpowers the senses. The eye traversing vacancy, and bent on distance, seems to imply that the objects of resentment are still remote; yet the expression has annihilated both time and space, the ardour of feeling has instantly transferred him to the tents of his recreant countrymen! Who shall dare to abide that storm of indignation, of scorn, of wrath, which darkens in the frown, which is bursting from the lips, and lightening in the eyes? "Now curse," the spectator is ready

to exclaim " for malediction hangs upon " thy tongue, and thou canst speak [1] !"

SONNET.

What sculptured form, still through revolving time,
Rises supreme amid the works of art,—
Whose lips do all but living sounds impart?
'Tis Israel's prophet—mark the air sublime,
The double ray [2]—the soul unstained by crime:
'Tis he! descending from the mountain lone,
When o'er his face a light celestial shone;
Thus awful seemed he in the watery clime,
While hung suspended the recoiling wave;
Thus looked, when following as they trode,
On Egypt's sons the ocean whelmed a grave;
If such an image—not the molten god,
Apostate Israel! ye had bent before,
The crime had then been venial to adore!

[1] When Michael Angelo had finished this statue, gazing at it for some moments, then sportively striking it on the thigh with his chisel, he is said to have exclaimed,—" Parla dunque, tu sai,"—" Speak now—thou canst."

[2] The Moses of Michael Angelo is represented with two rays issuing from his forehead. This statue was originally destined for a niche, in one of the four façades of the square, and isolated tomb intended by Julius II. for his own mausoleum. The undertaking

The first impressions are thus irresistibly powerful, but the effects are those of surprise, of astonishment, not of delight, or of sympathy. The Moses exhibits the representation of a being who awes—who subdues—yet fails to interest; for with such, humanity entertains no communion of feeling. The fascination, therefore, is quickly dis-

was one of the greatest in modern art; since the unfinished statues begun for the work are to be found scattered over all Italy, and even in France. Only one of the four fronts was completed, which now forms part of the interior wall of the church of St Peter *in vinculis*. Here the Moses remained, as originally placed by Michael Angelo, till a few years ago, when, under the direction of Canova, it was brought forward, being partly concealed within the niche, and also elevated on a higher pedestal. By these judicious alterations, this celebrated production is now seen to much greater advantage. It is gratifying to behold a great genius thus ministering, at the distance of centuries, to the glory of an illustrious predecessor.

The sonnet is a close translation of Zoppi's celebrated composition of the same kind, and on the same subject, which begins

"Chi è costui, che in si gran pietra sculto
Sude gigante," &c.

pelled,—the mind reluctantly submitting to an influence, originating solely in the imagination, and in which the sensibility has no portion. The sublime is here sought too exclusively, in the vehement, and the marvellous; every effect is forced, every trait exaggerated; and the whole shews a daring, a fearless originality, scorning every acknowledged boundary of the simple and the true, and verging on the extravagant and the false. The solemn majesty, the dignified repose, the commanding simplicity, which are admired in ancient sculpture; those milder beauties which sentiment alone can appreciate; those exalted graces which arise from elegance or nobleness of form; from refined and subdued expression; from elevated, yet genuine nature, are in the Moses looked for in vain.

The ideal of Michael Angelo, indeed, seems to have been derived solely from the imagination. His design, his expression, his forms, his attitudes have little community with nature; from her he borrows only science, which too frequently is employ-

ed, so as to conceal the source, whence it is received; while his conceptions, always remote from reality, are not seldom irregular and fantastical. The perfection of art, he appears to have placed in embodying the wildest, the most gloomy,—the severest, the most awful imaginings of the human mind, under shapes the most powerful and energetic, and in positions the most difficult and uncommon, as best adapted to the display of anatomical knowledge, and of technical address. In those productions, therefore, on which rests his more established renown, and in which his style appears fully evolved; art stands forth boldly prominent, challenging admiration, not as a means, most perfect as it eludes regard, but as a final end, claiming in itself a distinct and paramount excellence, independent of nature or of imitation, and exhibiting its creations,

"Like life, but not like mortal life to view."

From nature, however, the truly grand in art,—the ideal which elevates the thoughts, while it interests the heart, can

never be disjoined. It is thus merely another term, to express the representation of an object, such as it would exist, were nature freed from the operation of those secondary causes, which are constantly deteriorating her works. The power of this physical grandeur is heightened still more, by the moral sublimity of noble and dignified expression. It is this union of material beauty with intellectual elevation, which constitutes the true ideal of Grecian sculpture. In the master-pieces of antiquity, the scattered perfections of living nature are combined in one harmonious whole. Men are represented such as they ought—such as we feel they may have existed, and the soul recognises, with delightful sympathy, the human form restored to primeval loveliness,—superior to pain or accident, and undebased by vice or passion! In the works of Buonaroti, on the contrary, all is the offspring of an individual imagination,—ever grand indeed, vigorous, forcible, and astonishing; but rarely natural or pleasing in its conceptions. We are hurried along

by novelty, by wonder, by amazement,—but never yield ourselves the willing captives of a sweet and voluntary, yet sublime delusion.

Nor in the Moses, are the peculiarities of a mannered, though grand composition, the sole blemishes; conspicuous defects present themselves in the details, and in the general conduct of the piece, arising from a want of harmony, from a destitution of that internal agreement, and just ordonnance of parts, so essential to constitute a complete whole. The arms, separately considered, afford examples of technical skill, and of anatomical science, rarely equalled—never surpassed; but they are too gigantic for the body, to which they appear as if attached by chance: the lower extremities, likewise, as far at least as visible from beneath the masses of drapery, with which they seem encumbered rather than clothed, fall under the same censure. Yet with much to be pardoned,—with more to be admired, the Moses will ever remain

one of those anomalous productions, which criticism would condemn,—but which genius redeems. As the greatest work of its author, its appearance forms an epoch in the history of modern sculpture, but the subsequent era is marked rather by the retrogression of taste, than by the progress of refinement. The ideas excited by the view of this statue, in truth, partake more of the vague, but powerful enthusiasm which belongs to poetry,—than of that sober inspiration, and more palpable imagery, which direct the judgment, and guide the practice of the sculptor. Accordingly, while very few artists have attempted, and no one has accomplished the design of presenting a faithful imitation of this admired original, innumerable are the poetic tributes composed in its praise [1].

[1] "Perche" asks Cicognora, "il S. Pietro in carcere di Rafaello, da tutti i designatori, si studia si imita, si copia; e il Mose di Michael Angelo non si *modella, e non si copia da alcuno.*" Of the circumstance of the verses, every one must be informed, who is conversant with the more fugitive poetical literature of Italy.

The monuments of the Medici,

> " Where the gigantic forms of night and day,
> Turned into stone, rest everlastingly,
> Yet still are breathing, and shed round at noon
> A twofold influence,"—

present also admirable illustrations of Michael Angelo's style, both in composition and in execution [1]. In these, every figure bears the strong impress of a mind delighting in the grand, and the wonderful,—eager in the pursuit of untried modes of existence, and conscious of powers to execute the most daring conceptions. Intelligence

[1] These monuments are two in number, consisting each of a sarcophagus of white marble, on which recline two allegorical figures, naked, and of different sex, representing, or thought to represent, Day and Night, Dawn and Twilight. They are erected in a chapel sometimes called Michael Angelo's, from its being the erection of that artist, by order of Clement VII., in the church of San Lorenzo, at Florence. Under the one repose the remains of Guiliano de Medici, Duke of Nemours, and of Lorenzo de Medici, Duke of Urbino; the former brother of Leo X., the latter father of Alexander I., Duke of Florence. Seated in a recess, each above his own monument, are the statues of these princes, also by Michael Angelo.

in the naked—breadth of touch—boldness of manner, unite in producing an effect of life and of movement,—that the unfinished forms, left adhering in many parts to the rude block, seem as if they had been suddenly arrested in the act of starting into being, and were still struggling to get free. But, to a display of science, simplicity has been sacrificed. Difficulties appear to have been courted, in order to prove how easily they may be surmounted: the attitudes are consequently the most remote from such as nature would voluntarily assume, or graceful design select,—are in a high degree studied and constrained; and though, from the consummate skill with which the whole is conducted, the most perfect ease only be apparent,—it is the facility produced by art in the management of the details, not the higher grace resulting from elegance of composition, or nobleness of sentiment. In those beauties, which are addressed more immediately to the mind, in the deep interest arising from well-defined character, these works,

indeed, are so deficient, that they do not convey their own explanation, and, even by artists, have been described under different names [1]. The gloomy severity of the forms, their awe-inspiring, yet vague expression, strike the imagination, but without inspiring any definite feeling on which sympathy may repose.

Amid the living beauties, the almost breathing spirit, which, above all others, characterize the rapid and fervent execution of this artist, we discover many technical peculiarities and imperfections. It

[1] Thus Lomazzo cites two of those figures as Day and Nature, while Richardson thinks the two females are intended to represent Active and Contemplative Life, &c. To quote the opinions of travellers, would be every thing but useful,—the name of Michael Angelo is sufficient to set them off *altissimo* in the scale of praise. From the censure of deficiency in expression, must be exempted the statues of the two Princes,

> ——————" there, from age to age,
> Two ghosts are seated on their sepulchre."

That of Lorenzo, in particular, called *Il Pensiero*, or *Il Pensoso*, by Italian artists, is a most admirable representation of deep thought.

was his frequent practice to strike boldly into the marble, from having merely sketched the subject, and at most after composing a small model [1]. There even occur instances in which the accidental figure of the block appears to have suggested the original idea, and to have been the sole guide in the maturing the future statue [2]. While the mind—the eye—the hand, were thus in full exertion; while propriety of expression, and beauty of form,—mechanical detail, and general effect, were at once to be attended to, the most capacious intellect, the most dexterous skill, could hardly avoid error. Hence the want of proportion, conspicuous in so many works of this master; hence, also, so few completely finished, and these commonly presenting only one point of view. As regards more individual details, likewise, in the salient

[1] The original models of these very figures, about twenty inches high, are still to be seen in the gallery of the *Accademia di San Luca* at Rome.

[2] As in the celebrated St Mathew of the Duomo, still at Florence.

sweeps of the contours, the circles have rarely their just value, and consequently the surfaces approach the flatness of relief, rather than maintain the fulness of detached figures. Partly to compensate this deficiency in the advancing lines, partly as a characteristic distinction, which consists in always strongly pronouncing the muscles,—the retiring curves, or muscular depressions, are marked with exaggerated boldness. These peculiarities give to the productions of this school, in general, with the semblance of superhuman energy, the appearance of being as much anatomical studies as pleasing imitations of living nature. Trusting also to mechanical dexterity, and to the profound science which he possessed, Buonaroti was often seduced in executing the powerful conceptions of his vigorous fancy, to work from memory, without consulting the real model. This frequently produces a rigidity,—a want of feeling, even in his best performances, and paved the way for the introduction of those conventional modes which finally super-

seded the careful and diligent study of nature, and ultimately lead to the abandonment of every principle of genuine art.

In collecting and digesting the various details, connected with the history of sculpture during the sixteenth century, one pervading principle is discovered; which, in a rapid view of the subject, renders minuteness of description less necessary. However near the sculptors of this period may approach their great archetype in several particulars, and even excel him in some, they remain generally inferior, while their style and manner assimilate so closely to his, that they are properly classed under one comprehensive term—as disciples of the school of Michael Angelo. Of this school, the preceding observations have illustrated the prevailing character. A few brief notices, therefore, of his chief compeers and survivors, such as may preserve the series of events, and trace the diffusion of art, will thus suffice.

In the Florentine and Roman schools, now united under one head by common

principles, and a similar style, are to be distinguished two different classes of artists,—those who were merely imitators, — and those who were really the pupils of Michael Angelo. Among the former, Baccio Bandinelli was the rival and the enemy, rather than the follower of his illustrious contemporary; and this hostility was manifested in a manner equally unworthy of the man and of the artist. His works, which are numerous, doubtless exhibit great vigour of execution, and originality of invention; but his strength is without delicacy, his conceptions irregular, and his taste without refinement. The presumption and turbulence of his disposition usurped a temporary reputation, which the suffrages of posterity have refused to substantiate.—Baccio di Monte Lupo is likewise an original artist of considerable eminence, who was almost constantly employed at Florence; where the marble Crucifix in the church of San Lorenzo is esteemed his best performance.—Andrea Contucci, the founder of the celebrated school of Loreto, is evi-

dently an imitator of Buonaroti, with much of his own which is excellent.—Francisco Rustici, most eminent as a founder, in his bronze statues surpasses the artists of the preceding age, in those qualities which especially characterized his own,—boldness and freedom of execution. To these masters, other names of inferior note might be added.

The school of Michael Angelo, properly so called, consisted of the following disciples:—Raphael di Monte Lupo, a favourite pupil of his master, by whom are two statues in the tomb of Julius II., one on each side of the Moses.—Nicholo di Tribulo, an excellent founder, whose best performances are the Gates of San Petronio, at Bologna.—Giovanni dell' Opera, a most prolific artist; the statue of Architecture, on the tomb of his instructor, is deservedly praised [1].—Benvenuti Cellini,

[1] At Florence, in the church of Santa Croce,

——"beata che in un tempio accolto,
Serbi le Italie glorie, ultime forse."

Foscolo.

famous alike by the productions of his pen and of his chisel, and by the romantic incidents of his life. The bronze statue of the Perseus is his well-known masterpiece. —Vicenzo Danti, so closely imitates the style and manner of his master, that the labours of the former are sometimes attributed to the latter. — Bartolomeo Ammanato is esteemed as an architect, but as a sculptor he scarcely attained mediocrity. Lastly, of all the scholars of Michael Angelo, from the number and magnitude of his works, the beauty of his style, and the excellence of his genius, Giovanni di Bologna is deservedly celebrated as the most illustrious.

This artist occupies a prominent station in the history of sculpture, and more particularly in the Florentine school, from the death of his master to the end of the sixteenth century, and closed the series of great names with which that period was adorned [1]. In examining his performances,

[1] The group of Hercules and the Centaur, one of his most esteemed and latest works, was placed on its present site at Florence late in 1600.

we ascertain the advances effected in the art during the last thirty years of the present era. From the death of Buonaroti, the technical part is considerably improved,—mechanical operations better understood, and consequently execution facilitated. Hence, in the works of Giovanni, we discover no deficiency of a high, and, in some instances, exquisite finish, although no preceding sculptor can boast of productions so numerous, or more important. But, even in his manner, we observe the growth of those evils, which the example of his instructor introduced,—bold, rapid and masterly execution—grand and imposing composition, preferred to delicacy of expression—truth of feeling—and attention to the study of nature. The deterioration is of course still more apparent in the works of inferior imitators, who failed to acquire those nobler qualities, by which the errors and extravagances of mightier spirits are redeemed.

Amid the troubles which agitated the rest of Italy, Venice enjoyed profound re-

pose. The subsequent prudence of her councils had gradually restored the disastrous effects of the league of Cambray at the close of the fifteenth; and, during the succeeding century, her citizens could in security pursue the arts of elegance and of commerce. Over the Venetian schools of architecture and of sculpture, while the magnificent erections which grace the Piazza di San Marco, with other labours were carried on, long presided the elder Sansovino. This school is distinguished by richness and magnificence of composition, but displays a frequent want of simplicity and of purity. Though decidedly adopting the style of the "Tuscan artist," whose principles Sansovino had studied at Rome [1], it exhibits greater softness, with less of vigour and originality than the parent source. Among the most celebrated of its pupils are to be ranked Danese Cattaneo, equally conspicuous in letters as in art;—and Ales-

[1] Sansovino fled from Rome on the sack of that capital by Bourbon, to which he never returned; but remained in Venice from 1527.

sandro Vittoria, who first rendered common the practice of working in stucco.

In Naples and in Milan, at the opposite extremities of polished Italy, similar contingencies had introduced a similar style of art. This manner was bold, free and lively, in which, as principally employed on subjects of temporary interest [1], rapidity of execution was more valued than learned design, or elevated principle. As the most eminent of the Lombard artists, may be selected Agostino Busti,—and Guglielmo della Porta, whose statues of Justice and Prudence, on the monument of Paul III. in St Peter's, are justly placed among the noblest efforts of modern art. Of the Neapolitan school, during this century, Marliano Nola, and Girolamo Santa Croce, were the great ornaments. In purity of design, however, and in vigorous effect, the artists of Naples generally rest inferior to their cotemporaries of Lombardy, who in these

[1] Triumphal arches for processions, &c., decorations for fêtes, &c.

respects approach nearer to the great originals of the Tuscan and Roman schools.

In tracing the progress of modern sculpture during the sixteenth century, the historian is scarcely required to advance beyond the confines of Italy. In the other states of Europe, the limited patronage of sovereigns, and the still more confined assistance of private protection, were accorded to painters in preference to sculptors. In England,—in Spain,—in Germany [1], this was especially the case;—but in France, the expeditions of Charles VIII, and more particularly of Francis I,—the refined taste of the latter, and the close connection which, under that monarch, subsisted between the two countries, diffused some knowledge of the arts of Italy. It is not, however, till late in the present century, that we trace in France a school of native sculpture of

[1] Rodolph, emperor of Germany, on coming to the throne, "by and with the advice" of his *valet de chambre*, of two artists who were at his court, dismissed from his royal presence and protection Jean Mont, the sculptor, but retained Spranger of Anvers, the painter. Decamps V. de Peintres Flammands, tom. i.

any eminence, notwithstanding an earlier excellence has been claimed [1]. From the very origin, we trace a certain affected manner, both in the conceiving and in the execution of the subject, which pervades the works of the early French masters, giving to their style a peculiar cast of nationality, totally distinct from the character of Italian sculpture. At the same time, imitation of the latter is very evident; for the artists of this age, either directly or mediately, were pupils, generally, of the Tuscan schools.—Jean Cousin, in the air of his heads, the grace of his attitudes, and the disposition of his draperies, of all his countrymen and cotemporaries, approaches nearest to the taste of Italy.—Jean Gougon, who perished in the massa-

[1] Thus the French writers on the arts tell us, that Jacques d'Angouleme, better known by the familiar appellation of Maitre Jacques, competed with M. Angelo himself at Rome in 1550, for a statue of St Peter; and according to their partial testimony, *l'emporta pardessus lui.* This artist, however, studied and spent the greater part of his life in Italy.

cre of St Bartholomew's, almost rivals the excellencies of the preceding.—German Pilon displays great energy and fire, with much beauty of mechanical detail, but he is affected, and destitute of natural expression. To these, the name of Francavilla is sometimes added; but, like his master, Giovanni di Bologna, he is ranked more correctly among the Florentine artists; for, though Frenchmen by birth,—as sculptors both are Italians, and their principal works are to be found in Italy.

The death of Michael Angelo marks the point of separation, where the history of sculpture, during the century which has now elapsed, divides into two unequal portions [1]. Throughout the whole of the for-

[1] This great artist died at Rome in 1564 at a very advanced age. When Florence, his native country, was enslaved, through the power of the Pope and the Emperor, after defending her to the last by his skill as an engineer, he fled never to return, though courted back by all that tyranny could offer. The honours which, when living, he refused, were bestowed upon his ashes, which were restored to his country; and their return

mer and more important of these periods, the dominating supremacy of that master almost exclusively arrests the attention, and claims our undivided regard. During the second and briefer of these intervals, individual superiority ceases to continue pre-eminently conspicuous; but it is not the equality of mediocrity; — individual merit remains great, and the inspiring mantle of their teacher still rested on his disciples. Genius, which hitherto had rolled along in one mighty tide, surrounded by all the dread magnificence of nature, now flows in many streams; and as all retain indications of the same common origin, so each also boasts its own peculiar scenes of beauty and of grandeur.

Michael Angelo found the art circumscribed in means—somewhat timid in execution,—yet faithful to nature, and affecting in expression. Greater freedom of style,—deeper feeling of the imaginative

was a real apotheosis — a voluntary acknowledgment to the genuine nobility of genius. Condivi, Vita de M. Angelo, &c.

and the elegant—were alone wanting to constitute a high species of excellence. The outset of his career promised the attainment of this perfection; but, borne away by the impetuosity of a lofty genius, which scorned all control, he too soon abandoned the imitation and the examples of real existence, to embody the creations of fancy. He marked the perplexities and the constraint, under which his predecessors had visibly laboured, in their endeavours to unite the actual forms of living nature with the more vigorous and refined conceptions of ideal beauty. Overlooking the productions of ancient art, in which this union is so happily accomplished, because, to his vigorous rather than refined perception, their simplicity seemed poverty,—he resolved to adopt a style, bold, forcible, and austere; which, seldom addressing the sensibility, should derive its powers of captivating solely from the imagination [1]. E-

[1] In his own elegant verses, M. Angelo prefers ideal beauty to the real charms even of his mistress, the most lovely woman of the age.

ven the manual processes necessary to realize its conceptions, were to participate in the ardent temperament of mind by which these were inspired ;—and the hand seems impatient of that very hardness of the marble, which preserves to the traits of the chisel their immortality.

When to produce rapid and forceful impressions, thus constitutes the chief object in the productions of the fine arts,—the vehement, the novel, the wonderful, will be preferred,—and the delicate, the simple, the natural, will become gradually obscured. Accordingly, in the sculpture of the sixteenth century,—the representations of the gentler affections—the dignity of subdued emotion—the calm grace of repressed and unaffected action—the almost evanescent movements of milder feeling, are lost in marked, rather than elegant character—strong expression—contrasted at-

" Dimmi di grazia, Amor, se gli occhi miei
Veggono il ver della beltà ch' io miro,
O s'io l'ho dentro al cor, che ovunque giro
Veggo piu bello il viso di costei !"

titude—fierce passion,—and the grand ultimately approaches to the exaggerated [1]. In the works of its great inventor, at least, the effects of this style are generally in the highest degree sublime;—but this sublimity never arises from connection with human sympathy. It overwhelms and astonishes —seldom delights—refines—or melts the heart. "It is rather that magic feeling of elevated horror, which hurries us away into craggy vallies, headlong torrents, solitary forests, threatening storms;—than that sublimity which arises from the soft melancholy of the starry night, the gentle smile of nature, or the fresh breath of morning [2]."

[1] In the works of Michael Angelo, indeed, we trace a gradual removal from the simple and the natural. He almost appears to have been himself insensible of his advances towards the forced and the exaggerated. This is singularly, but not inaptly illustrated by the following allusion: "Una donna che accostumarsi giovinetta a lisciare le guacie di minio, non passano molt' anni che senza avvedersene, le pare d'essere sparuta se non mostrarsi colorita come una maschera scenica. Storia della Scultura, tom. ii. &c.

[2] Cicognara.

A style which thus carried the imaginative to the very verge of possibility;—which not only aspired at excellence altogether distinct from imitation, but introduced a necessity of constantly pursuing novelty;—which created a standard of ideal beauty, highly artificial, and in many respects independent of nature,—operated with baneful influence on the future progress and purity of the art. The works of Michael Angelo, exhibiting the principles and full development of this style, were regarded as the only model of imitation. Originality thus began quickly to disappear; the deviations of even his immediate successors from the simple and the beautiful were great, because, in following an example thus exclusively ideal, they receded more and more from nature; while the irregularities and defects, which his genius had consecrated or concealed, became exaggerated in the hands of mediocrity. The imitation of a natural style will seldom prove hostile to gradual improvement; but even the excellencies which this recog-

nised, carried, as its character required, to the very extremity of daring, became sources of error to imitators of inferior capacity. The successors of Buonaroti, also, in their eagerness to attain that boldness and facility which form an essential character of his manner, too often neglected the study of those principles which guided the more learned hand of their master. From these various causes, a rapid degeneracy was beginning to take place;—and a system of exaggeration and of mannerism had visibly commenced at the close of the sixteenth century, when the principles of Michael Angelo pervaded every school in Europe.

When a high degree of excellence has been attained in any department of art,—internal corruption can never be so great, as to occasion a sudden and rapid retrogression, without the operation of external causes. Accordingly we find, that the decline of sculpture from the commencement of the seventeenth century, must in part be ascribed to those changes, both political

and moral which, during this period, affected the objects of intellectual pursuit.

The different states of Italy, in which the arts had hitherto been cultivated, from the various causes of national enthusiasm, political ambition, and the personal taste or policy of their princes, were now either enthralled by tyranny, or no longer animated by the same spirit. Rome, at no era, had cultivated the arts from the attachment of her citizens to these elegant pursuits. At no period could she boast of a native school, either of painting or of sculpture; and the expatriated artist there found a home, because the splendour of his productions advanced the political views, or flattered the personal vanity of her rulers. As the embellishment of the capital advanced, therefore, a decline of patronage, and ultimately of the arts, was the necessary consequence. Florence was already filled with the most magnificent productions of sculpture; and her free citizens,—her impartial magistrates, under whose fostering care infant art had been

reared, were now no more. The other Italian states were equally destitute of governments who protected, and of princes who patronized the arts. In Bologna, indeed, a new school of painting had arisen; but this, though rendered illustrious by many of the most celebrated names in the history of that art, tended, by the character of its style, and by the ascendancy which it acquired, more to the deterioration, than to the advancement of sculpture.

In Italy, also, during the seventeenth century, moral causes operated strongly in directing the attention to other studies, and in forming intellectual habits opposed to those of the artist. A spirit of inquiry and of philosophical discussion came abroad in the age, and turned the genius of the time to mathematics and to science. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had boasted their Ghibertis—Donatellos—Raffaeles and Buonarotis;—the seventeenth was adorned by Galileo — Toricelli—Viviani—Cassini. Nature, as if unwilling, or unable to bless the same epoch with opposite and transcendant talents, seemed to

rob the arts in order to enrich philosophy [1]. It was, however, in reality only a change in the provinces of exertion; and those powers had hitherto been exercised in the realms of taste, which were now employed on subjects not less noble or sublime. The same political causes, a similar want of patronage, and preference given to other studies, affected in like manner literature and poetry [2]. Between these pursuits, indeed, and the cultivation of the fine arts, there

[1] Michael Angelo died in Rome on the same day on which Galileo was born in Florence.

[2] Poetry had fallen from its "high estate" in the sixteenth century to mere conceit, and play on words in the seventeenth. At the head of these "verbal bards" appears Marini. Some names, indeed, we still find who illustrated this period with a portion of ancient vigour and feeling, as Chiabrera and Filicaja. But if good poets were few, munificent patrons were still more rarely to be found. In allusion to this, Tassoni published the first edition of his poem (La Secchia Rapita) with his portrait, holding a *fig* in the right hand, with the following distich inscribed below:

"Dextra cur ficum quæris mea gestit inanem,
Longi operis *merces hæc* fuit, *aula* dedit."
"Lo in my hand a worthless fig appears,
A prince's recompense of studious years."

appears to be an intimate relation. The taste is the same, though differently developed; and, in small states, they will generally be found to have flourished and decayed simultaneously. But, between the spirit of analytical inquiry—the eagerness of discovery, which conduct to philosophic truth, and the creative genius which leads to excellence in works of imagination, the opposition is so vast, that the human mind has never attained high eminence in both, in the same age, and among the same people [1].

We have seen that the immediate successors of Michael Angelo had begun to decline from the lofty but fatal pre-eminence, to which the peculiar character of his genius and labours had elevated him. A succession of undistinguished artists, and of unimportant productions continued to disseminate the corruption, and connect the close of the sixteenth century with the age of Bernini. Of the names or works which

[1] Sous Péricles, les recherches philosophiques furent séverement proscris par les Atheniens, &c. Voy. d'Anach. tom. i. If not proscribed, philosophy has been neglected in every other illustrious epoch of the art.

mark this interval, it is unnecessary to enter into details. In every respect the purity of taste was greatly deteriorated, and that of mechanical execution formed the only department in which vigorous powers were still exhibited.

No artist ever displayed happier dispositions for excelling, or at an earlier age than Bernini. Nor were these indications of youthful talent fallacious. He was certainly endowed by nature with all those qualities requisite for becoming one of the greatest of modern sculptors. He was inspired by an ardent love of the art; animated by a noble desire of honourable distinction; and possessed unwearied activity in the pursuit of his object. Such is the organization of genius. At twelve years of age he produced portraits which excited the astonishment of all who beheld them; at fifteen he finished his group of Æneas and Anchises; and at eighteen that of Apollo and Daphne, the wonderful execution of which still claims admiration. His facility and address in the last particular, indeed, have seldom or ever been

surpassed. Under his chisel the marble seemed to assume form at a word; and he appeared to create rather than to sculpture the productions of his fertile skill [1].

But these rare endowments—these excellent acquirements, from the course subsequently adopted by their possessor, were rendered useless, or rather hurtful to the art, by throwing a splendour round the errors and extravagances of a capricious genius. He aspired to the reputation of an inventor, and chose rather to be considered the founder of a sect, than to be placed among the chiefs of the modern school.

To Bernini the antique appeared meagre in outline, poor in composition, and feeble in effect. The works of Michael Angelo he preferred to those of the ancient masters, as being more forcible in their impressions, but possessing a character too severe and forbidding. He hoped to elicit a third style, exhibiting distinctive excellencies of

[1] "In my youth," says Bernini of himself, "Non dava mai colpo in fallo;"—"I never made a false stroke."

its own, and which should display greater strength and energy than the former, while it surpassed the latter in suavity and grace. In pursuit of this imaginary perfection, he wandered still farther from simplicity and nature, introducing a taste inconsistent with the real principles of sculpture, — which finally extinguished art in mannerism, extravagance, and exhaustion. To produce effect, was now the only object of study; and every means of startling attitude—flying drapery—and forced expression, were employed to strike, dazzle, and surprise. Statues were composed and draped after the manner of figures in painting; and the full-flowing robes of the Bolognese school were adopted as the models which, in this respect, sculptors were to follow. Thus, amid greater errors engrafted on those of the preceding age, Bernini, by the introduction of a style which rendered less necessary the science, that had hitherto constituted a redeeming quality among the imitators of Michael Angelo, and had tended to maintain an intercourse with nature, pro-

duced a more fatal separation, and hastened the downfall of taste. The powers of beautiful and facile execution, possessed by him in so eminent a degree, recommended or concealed the impurities of his style, and reconciled those whom they could not deceive [1]. Among artists this style was quickly and almost universally adopted, both as

[1] The purest of Bernini's works is the group of Apollo and Daphne, in the villa Borghese. One of the first in which the *gusto Berninesco*, the style of his maturer years, is decidedly to be traced, is the tomb of Urban VIII. in St Peter's. The statue of the Pope, and the *concetto* of placing a skeleton on the tomb, writing the name of the deceased in a book, were exceedingly admired in their day. On this monument the Cardinal Rappaciolo wrote the following lines, which were then repeated by every one, and may serve as a specimen of a popular *jeu d'esprit* of that time.

" Bernin, si vivo il gran Urbano ha finto,
E si ne' duri bronzi è l'alma impressa,
Che per torgli la fé, la morte istessa
Sta sul sepolchro a dimostrarlo estinto."

" Still by Bernini's art great Urban lives,
Such breathing softness to the stone he gives;
Nor could we e'er believe the spirit fled,
But Death stands by, to tell the Saint is dead."

it was the reigning mode, and as its author enjoyed, during a great part of this century, such dominating influence and exclusive patronage, as rendered him the tyrant of art, to whom all who desired employment were expected to render homage.

Among the cotemporaries of Bernini, who were thus generally reduced to the rank of imitators, two still maintained the dignity of independent, and, in some respects, of original minds. These were Alessandro Algardi of Bologna, and Francis du Quesnoy of Bruxelles, distinguished in Italy by the appellation of his country—Il Fiammingo.

Algardi had studied painting under the founders of the Bolognese school; and we may even discover the evidences of an acquaintance with the antique, though perverted by peculiar notions. When in advanced life he afterwards adopted the profession of a sculptor, by the better principles in which his youth had thus been trained, his style was preserved comparatively pure. If, like his compeers, he confounded

the distinctive characters of sculpture and of painting,—he claims the merit of at least following correct examples; while they imitated Pietro da Cortona, or Luca Giordano, he selected as models the Caracci and Domenichino. The most celebrated performance of this artist, and, indeed, one of the most extraordinary labours of modern art, is the grand basso relievo, representing the invading Army of Attila stopped by St Leo in its march to Rome [1].

The department in which the talents of Fiammingo were chiefly exercised, aided perhaps in preserving his manner uncontaminated by extravagant expression, or conventional forms; and, as the sculptor of children, he not only excelled every cotem-

[1] This work, the largest relievo known, is executed on five separate blocks, united with great skill. Its height is 38, and breadth 18 palms, (about 25 feet by 12). Here it has evidently been the grand object of the artist to rival the sister art;—every thing peculiar to painting, colour alone excepted, has been tried. Those who have examined the celebrated original in St Peter's, must allow its utter destitution of effect, from the total want of simplicity.

porary, but even equalled the greatest of his predecessors. Nor was he inferior in works of greater magnitude; though in these his taste was little calculated to secure the approbation of his own age, as not exhibiting sufficient indications of the grand style, —as that of Bernini was then falsely termed. For this very deficiency, his statue of St Andrew, in one of the niches of the cupola, is now justly regarded as one of the best colossal figures in St Peter's. As a model, Fiammingo will be found to have selected Titian, whose pictures of children hold a middle style between those of Raffaelle and Correggio;—not so learned, pure, and correct in outline as those of the former, they owe less than similar productions of the latter, to the magic though fugitive graces of shade and colouring [1].

[1] It is frequently maintained that Correggio was the model followed by Fiammingo. Every one, however, who has carefully studied the works of that painter, must be aware that they are little calculated to assist the sculptor;—deprive them of their *chiar oscuro*, and of their delicious colouring, and they are absolutely nothing. A sculptor requires more palpable guides.

Participating, yet faintly, in the same false principles—the two preceding artists are to be considered rather as rivals than followers of Bernini. Their style and manner are more sustained — more chastened—more severe; and they might have prevented, or at least retarded the complete decline of sculpture, had not their merit been eclipsed by the superior reputation, or their fortunes depressed by the advantageous position of that master. By this ascendancy so fatal to art, Algardi was kept in continued obscurity and neglect; while Fiammingo to obtain employment, bowed before the reigning idol, but was early poisoned by a brother jealous of

The most esteemed work of Fiammingo, is the famous relievo in the church of the Apostles at Naples, representing a Concert of Cherubs. Of the beautiful monument in St Maria dell' Anima, at Rome—two Children supporting a curtain, Reubens thus writes to its author: "I know not how to thank you for the models of the two Children for St Mary's which you have sent me, still less can I express my opinion of their beauty. Nature, rather than art, appears to have sculptured them; and the marble is softened into life."

Anvers, 17*th April* 1640.

his fame. The genius of Bernini thus remained paramount, maintaining its supremacy during the greater part of the seventeenth century,—while the eighteenth was opened by the second generation of his actual disciples [1].

Rome was thus the grand centre of corruption, but what of excellence still remained, was to be found there also. In Lombardy, Naples, Tuscany, and all over Italy, the same character prevailed, while Venice enjoyed a more barbarous perversion of its own, without the merit of producing one man of genius to redeem, or to extenuate error. To trace the progress of decline in each separate state, and through a succession of artists, whose mediocrity offers no salient feature to the observer, would be equally tedious and nugatory [2].

[1] Bernini died in 1680.

[2] Of these obscure artists, the name of Giovanni Gonelli, a Tuscan, may be mentioned as illustrating a very singular fact. After studying sculpture till upwards of twenty years of age, he totally lost his sight in Mantua, during its siege in 1630. He still conti-

Every age has, or imagines it possesses its own great men, and, to impartial posterity, often seems to have been strangely prejudiced in this delusion. About the commencement of the eighteenth century, Camillo Rusconi, a Milanese, and scholar of Ferrata, a favourite pupil of Bernini,—was the great man at Rome. This artist, though as inferior to Bernini, as the latter fell beneath the Tuscan masters who preceded him, was said by his compatriots to unite the correctness and majesty of the ancients, with the expression and graces of

nued, however, to labour at his profession, sculpturing *striking likenesses* of several individuals of high rank, and at length of the Pope himself, (Urban VIII.) "Facendo," as Baldinucci in his quaint manner expresses it, "che l'uffizio degli occhi facessero le mani." He even sculptured from *memory* the portrait of a young woman named Elizabeth, with whom he had been in love before losing his sight. On this bust was inscribed by Cardinal Polatta the following distich:

"Giovan ch' è cieco, e Lisabetta amò,
La scolpi nell' idea che Amor formò."

Sculptured by love, Elizabeth's portrait view,
Though blind the artist, yet the work is true.

the moderns. Yet Rusconi was not destitute of talent; with sounder principles and more refined taste, he might have obtained merited reputation. Nor were occasions wanting of exercising his powers, since in the twelve colossal statues of the Apostles, placed by Clement XI. on the façade of the Lateran church, he conducted the only undertaking of importance, which, during this period, illustrates the history of sculpture. Of these, Rusconi himself executed four; in the rest he was assisted by six others, whose names will point out the principal sculptors of the time:—Stephen Monnot, and Le Gros, each finished two;—Guiseppe Mazzuoli, Francisco Moratti, Lorenzo Ottoni, Angelo Rossi, each produced one statue [1].

In these works are displayed, redeemed only by facility of mannered invention, and by audacity of mechanical execu-

[1] For every statue the artist received 2000 crowns; but whether this included the price of the material does not appear. The whole expense to the Pope was 60,000 crowns. Rusconi was further rewarded with two benefices.

tion,—all the characteristic errors of this school. Grandeur of effect is sought in greatness of extent,—and boldness of hand is substituted for sublimity of thought. The forms are buried in a load of drapery, disposed in immense masses, as is the practice in pictures intended to be viewed from a distance, and exactly in the manner of the favourite painters of that age. The conclusion, however, is not warranted by fact, in ascribing these effects, as has been done, to the designs of Carlo Maratti [1]. This was a style of art, not derived from a new or partial source, but proceeded from a principle of exaggeration and of novelty,—to be traced, as the reader is now aware, in the works of Michael Angelo,—which was pursued as a leading object by Bernini, and received full development among his successors.

Rusconi and his compeers are the last

[1] See Reynolds' "Discourses," Dis. X. With the eye of an artist, Sir Joshua perceived the defect; but, wanting the research of the historian, he ascribed the corruption to a local and temporary cause.

artists, who, for nearly three-fourths of the eighteenth century, merit particular notice; and the work just described may be considered as the expiring effort of Italian sculpture prior to the restoration by Canova. A crowd of artisans continued for a while to haunt the scenes of former glory; but to enumerate their names or productions, could neither interest the reader, nor illustrate the subject. Corruptions in taste, and extravagances of composition went on increasing, but the means of displaying them offered only in detail,—and, finally, the sound of the mallet was scarcely audible in a city of Italy. In the department of mere labour, the chisel was still wielded in a bold and skilful manner; but this advantage rather augmented the evil, both as it came to be regarded the praise chiefly to be aimed at,—and as facility was thus enjoyed of following every caprice of fancy. In the fine arts, the powers of execution are the last to acquire perfection, and retain excellence the longest;—they survive—when moral beauty, sentiment,

and truth have long ceased to ennoble the creations which their mastery realizes.

The progress of Transalpine sculpture during the preceding period, now demands our attention. In France, Lewis XIV. patronised the arts with munificence becoming a great monarch; and though his motives were merely political—not flowing from any innate love of elegance or refinement, their effects were equally beneficial. To create French artists, he established academies—endowed professorships—proclaimed rewards—instituted honours—and accomplished the object. Patronage, however, cannot introduce purity of taste, nor command originality of invention;—these are results of causes more universal in their operation, and less extrinsic in their nature. France has ever been under the influence of that domination which Italy has always exerted in the arts, and more especially in sculpture. In the present instance this influence was most direct; and they were not the models of a purer age—the monuments of better art, that guided

imitation, but the works of Bernini and of his school. A similarity of circumstances also, concurred to introduce, in both countries, the same vitiated style of sculpture. Le Brun in Paris maintained the same exclusive sway enjoyed by Bernini at Rome: Nor was this despotism of an individual master equally injurious in the respective capitals; — the latter was indisputably a man of genius, and a sculptor,—the ascendancy of the former was not the superiority of a great mind, and his reign was yet more fatal to sculpture, tending still farther to extend the supremacy which painting had acquired. Directing all public works, the French sculptors were necessitated to copy his designs, composed solely in the manner of painters, and without any practical knowledge of their art,—or, if they opposed this tyranny, remained unemployed [1].

[1] See Poussin's Letter to Pozzo. Or if those who refused to cringe to this arrogance were employed, it was only in trifling works. " Non ho tempo, ni per soddisfare a me, ni per servire ad un padrone od amico, essendo impiegato di continuo a *bagatelle* ———

The merits of Gerardon, the son of a founder at Troyes, entitled him to, and ought to have secured the success which ultimately attended his exertions, without his being forced previously to become the sycophant of Le Brun. His style of sculpture, though cold, is noble, and more correct than that of his cotemporaries. His manner of design is also pure, and free from glaring errors, but heavy and destitute of character, and too frequently reminds the spectator of similar productions of ancient masters. That he was the Phidias of his age, though asserted by Fontaine, may be disputed; but that Gerardon was a sculptor of great talent, if not of genius, must be acknowledged.

Strongly opposed to the disposition of his compatriot, appears the character of "the fiery and energetic Puget," the favourite artist of native writers [1]. His exe-

ed altre frascherie." Raccolt. di Lett. del Sig. Pozzo, tom. i., Pous. a Posso. Puget, the sculptor, in like manner petitioned for his dismissal "from Paris, and from Le Brun," &c.

[1] Puget is styled the Michael Angelo of France.

cution is bold, rapid and masterly,—but in composition he is defective, in science inaccurate, and in expression without dignity. In every intellectual beauty of art his works are imperfect, presenting little of elevation, nobleness, or grace;—the forms are often vulgar, and always exhibit the peculiarities of an individual model. Yet such is the vigour of mechanical detail—such the breadth and freedom of touch, that his figures appear endowed with the

Sculptor—painter—architect, though what he built does not appear, and only as a sculptor is he known. The parallel, however, would not otherwise hold.—To the spirit of Ultra-liberalism which pervades the age, it may appear prejudice to assert, that if, in any one particular more than another, the national vanity of the French be offensively apparent, it is in speaking of their arts and artists. Yet such is the fact. Of this, the encomiums lavished upon Puget afford a striking instance. These might be pardoned; but when a writer, in other matters so liberal and well informed as M. du Quincy, by a *disingenuous* supposition, endeavours to exalt the horses of Costou, now in the *Champs Elysées*, above those ascribed to Phidias and Praxiteles, on *Monte-Cavallo* at Rome, we are at a loss, whether to view the assertion with greater indignation, or contempt.

privileges of life and movement. In early youth Puget had studied painting under Pietro da Cortona, whose large and effective, but unlearned style, is the most remote from the rigid purity of sculpture; accordingly, its influence becomes sufficiently apparent in that of France, where, subsequently to this period, it was generally followed.

As we advance to the conclusion of the seventeenth, and especially in the early portion of the following century, French sculptors rapidly increase; and, as the occasions of exercising it were more splendid, the art seemed in better condition than in Italy. The actual condition of taste, however, was alike fallen in both countries. Of the artists who flourished during this interval, Sarrasin and Guillain preserved, in the Caryatides of the Louvre, some remains of ancient propriety;—Le Gros and Theodon are best known at Rome;—in France, the names of Le Pautre, Desjardin, Coysevaux, Vaucleve, the two Coustous, are still remembered with honour from nume-

rous groups and statues. These, and many others of inferior note, adorned the brief golden age of French sculpture, which, under the imbecile Lewis XV., suffered a rapid decline. Bouchardon, the only artist of eminence who distinguished that reign, possessed no mean talents, but was destitute of the dignity and firmness of character, requisite to enable the individual, by pursuing the dictates of his own better judgment, to oppose the caprices of reigning modes [1].

Lewis XVI. early shewed a disposition to patronise the fine arts, and had ordered a series of statues of the great men of France. That this design was never executed, can be no subject of regret; — a renovation of principle could alone restore purity. To this series may in some measure be considered to belong the statue of Voltaire by Pigal, which introduces the nar-

[1] The works of this period, which adorned the capital and chief provincial cities of France, being mostly in bronze, have long since disappeared in the revolutionary cannon.

rative to the labours of living artists. Pigal was undoubtedly a man of talent, as his Mercury evinces; but, in the present work, propriety has been sacrificed to an appearance of science. This statue is not draped; and as Voltaire was remarkable for meagre leanness of person, the figure was copied from a living model, the most emaciated to be found;—nor does the representation belie its prototype.

" Pigal au naturel represente Voltaire;—
Le squelette à la fois offre l'homme et l'auteur,
L'œil qui le voit, sans parure etrangere,
Est effrayé de sa maigreur [1]."

During the preceding period, Spain and Germany were supplied with artists, who,

[1] " Here, sculptured to the life, behold Voltaire;—
This naked skeleton with hideous air,
Stripped of their borrowed guise, presents to view,
The squalid form—and worthless author too."

The epigram has considerable point when viewed in relation to the principles of his writings, and their alleged poverty in original matter. Pigal went to Ferney, in order to model the head of this statue from the life; on which occasion, says De Grimm, Voltaire, who had, or affected a great aversion to have his picture or bust taken, refused to sit to the artist,

from their education, necessarily disseminated in these countries the vitiated taste, and false principles of the Italian schools. Spain, indeed, has never discovered any decided predilection for the art; and her sculptors are little known beyond the walls of Madrid, of Grenada, Cordova, and Seville, where, in the internal decorations of the churches, their labours are chiefly preserved. Germany has been more eminent; and the reputation of Rauchmüller of Vienna—of Leigebe of Silesia—of Schluter of Berlin, is respectable among the sculptors of the eighteenth century.

In the remains of early English art, which have escaped the fury of civil war and the rage of fanaticism, a singular anomaly is to be observed. From the commencement of the seventh, to the conclusion of the fourteenth century, four distinct species of architecture may be traced in the sacred and feudal edi-

till one day, entertaining a large party at dinner, he was so delighted with a remark of Pigal's, which he thought a professional argument against the possibility of casting the golden calf of the Israelites, that he immediately promised to sit for the bust.

fices of Britain. From this period the art gradually declines, suffering its greatest deterioration during the reigns of Henry VIII. and his three immediate successors, while John of Padua, and other Italian artists, are known to have been directors of the public works. In like manner, the remaining sculptures of the thirteenth are superior to similar performances of the two succeeding centuries. From these facts a conclusion arises, totally opposed to the assertion made by the writers of France and of Italy,—that we derived our early art from the latter country [1]. Had such been the case, the same gradations as in the parent schools would have been apparent. A corruption differing in this respect, and while Italian artists did preside, was produced by attempting to unite their own with the national style previously existing. Subsequently to the fifteenth century, and during the era now immediately reviewed, this island could not boast the presence of a single sculptor of eminence. It reflects

[1] Cicognara, Stor. del. Scult., tom. i. Du Quincy, Annales des Savans, 1819, &c.

credit, however, on the discernment of Charles I., that the best painters, and the most correct architects of the age, were patronised at his court. While Bernini, and more especially his opponent Boromini, were filling Rome with edifices of licentious architecture, and unclassic ornament, Inigo Jones was erecting noble structures in a style so pure and elegant as rivals the beauties of Grecian art, and has acquired for their author, even in Italy, the appellation of the English Palladio [1]. The taste, however, was of short-lived continuance, and did not extend its influence to all the arts of design. Sculpture, indeed, can scarcely be considered as indigenous in this country, before the native and distinguished masters of the present day added this laurel also to the crown of British ge-

[1] Respecting the projected palace, of which the Banqueting-house at Whitehall forms only a part, an Italian writer observes, "Se fosse compiuto, potrebbe tenersi per uno de' primi palazzi del mondo." A similar compliment is passed on Greenwich Hospital, "which," it is said, "but for the bravery of British seamen, would be too noble for its present purpose."

nius. Cibber, Roubilliac—all our noted sculptures anterior to the late Bacon, were foreigners. Their isolated labours, likewise, tending little to the establishment of a national school,— supported chiefly by private patronage, and exercised on few public works, are connected too remotely with the general history of the art, to require in this place particular illustration.

The various secondary causes which, from the death of Michael Angelo, contributed to the decline of sculpture, may be arranged under two general divisions :— Mistaken ideas of excellence entertained by professors :—Unfavourable state of patronage.

1. In the fine arts, the empire of imagination is bounded by that relative truth which it is the object of each to attain,— and by the peculiar means employed to express this relation. Beyond these limits, the excursions of fancy cease to afford pleasure, both as its creations are then opposed to nature, and as they vio-

late the essential character of the particular art. In these respects poetry enjoys a wider range than painting, while sculpture is more confined than either. The objects which the sculptor pursues are two, —form and character;—yet even in these the principles of his art admit a more limited selection than is granted to the poet or to the painter. As the legitimate purposes of sculpture, then, are circumscribed, attempts at innovation are more dangerous: The desire of novelty, therefore—a continued effort to extend the boundaries of the art, by the introduction of imaginary perfections inconsistent with its real excellencies,—were the rocks on which the sculptors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made fatal shipwreck of truth, of simplicity, and of beauty.

These supposed improvements were directed to the acquisition of four grand objects.—A style of composition was aimed at, more purely ideal, and less connected with nature, than is exhibited either in the remains of ancient art, or in the works of

early modern masters.—As characteristics of this imaginative style, the proportions are enlarged, the expressions exaggerated, and indications of power and energy thus sought, more prominent than reality ever presents. — Sculpture was assimilated as closely as possible to painting, merit being estimated by the extent to which imitation was carried, not only in the legerity of effect, and complication of detail, but, latterly, in the facility of production.— Finally, a bold and masterly execution was substituted for the nobler and more important beauties of correctness and purity.

The French school being merely a scion of those of Italy, similar modes obtained in both, while the former possessed its own peculiar and additional corruptions. In search of what they termed native character and native grace, the French sculptors deviated still farther from the forms of the antique, and from the principles of the Florentine masters. In this they should at least have enjoyed the advantage of imitating nature, but, adopting conventional

practices, they produced only affectation and grimace [1]. The principles and practice of other schools served only more widely to disseminate the preceding irregularities.

Such, with various injudicious changes in the volume, disposition, and forms of drapery, were the leading errors in a system, which, from Michael Angelo downwards, is marked by increasing destitution of simplicity and verity. Each succeeding age strove to excel in the pursuit of novelty,—while successive efforts at meretricious improvement, and in the hands of those who still commanded great facility of execution, tended only, more quickly to de-

[1] "*Rien ne fut simple et naturel, pas même les portraits,*" says one of their own writers, speaking of this period, and of the same art; yet anxious to save the credit of his country in the article of beauty, he labours to prove that it certainly exists there, though the French sculptors unfortunately missed it, since the Grecian profile is not uncommon, and as the facial angle is frequently 90°, he himself observed it 95°!—David. Es. sur l'Art Stat. p. 472. The subject is recommended to the consideration of craniologists.

stroy every lingering remain of good taste and of true science. Nature being abandoned for the prestiges of fancy, — the powers of original conception, and of vigorous feeling, became effete in mannerism, affectation, and absurdity.

II. However deficient even that patronage, which merely affords employment, had finally been rendered in the majority of the Italian states, yet during the seventeenth, and early part of the last century, neither in Rome, nor at the French court, was encouragement wanting. In both instances, however, under the Papal, no less than by the French government, the moral effects of an enlightened, liberal and impartial patronage were overlooked or disregarded. Court influence conferred on some favourite painter or sculptor the sole direction of all public works; who thus became the only channel through which reward or distinction was to be obtained. Of such a system the natural consequences were,—to extinguish the inspiring competition of genius—to substitute the artifices

of intrigue for the independent exertions of talent—to impose dictation where freedom is indispensable to excellence,—and to propagate the peculiar style or notions of an individual master, instead of fostering the precepts of genuine art, and the just principles of taste.

In every country, also, that the fine arts, and more especially sculpture, may be cultivated with success, they must not only be protected by government,—they must be cherished as objects of national feeling. But during the era, and in the countries now treated of, patronage was merely the result of personal predilection, or of political views on the part of the sovereign,—followed, perhaps, from ostentation, by some of the chief nobility. It was not a sentiment animating the great body of the people; nor were the splendid monuments which arose in the respective capitals regarded as subjects with which the happiness and glory of the nation were associated. This partial support being withdrawn —the arts having thus no hold on national

enthusiasm, the only permanent stay, as respects both duration and refinement, of the more ornamental appendages of civilization, gradually sunk into degradation and neglect.

On the extent, propriety and effects of government protection in the instance of the fine arts, opinions the most hostile have indeed been entertained. In opposition, however, to two principal theories, which the reasonings on this subject go to maintain,—it clearly appears, from an attentive examination of their history in those countries where they have been most successfully practised;—*first*, That the fine arts can never permanently flourish as instruments in the hands of despotic rulers; —and, *secondly*, Painting and sculpture can never be cultivated with success in any country, however enlightened or however free, where the aid and protection, and cordial co-operation of government are denied.

In the former case, the sacred influence of national sentiment,—that community of

feeling which appreciates and preserves pure taste, — which animates genius by the proud consciousness of universal utility, and of general esteem, is wanting. The people naturally regard with distrust and jealousy the measures of despotism, — rejecting communion or participation in its designs. The arts, therefore, under these circumstances, can enjoy but a temporary splendour in subserviency to a particular purpose, and passing state of things.

In the latter instance — without the countenance and support of government, the fine arts, it must be evident, never can acquire dignity and importance, so as to render them objects of national interest. The evils of private judgment in corrupting taste—the dependence of professors—the absence of a co-operating spirit of general enthusiasm, must prove even more injurious, where the labours of the artist are merely viewed as ministering to private luxury and show. In the republics of Greece—in the cities of Italy, those primeval seats of elegance and freedom,

the arts were not only patronised and encouraged by the state, but were absolutely under the control of its rulers;—thus supplying one of the most fruitful sources of political power, and closely interwoven with policy—with religion—even with individual character. National feeling was directed to the creation of splendid monuments, while these were made to reciprocate a powerful sympathy in cherishing the energies of patriotism, and in supporting a constitution under which designs so glorious were meditated, and undertakings so magnificent accomplished.

The fine arts, then, are most likely to attain the highest degree of excellence, when, among a free opulent and intelligent people, they are fostered by a liberal government, and protected by a sovereign of enlightened mind, and of elegant taste.

The progress of modern sculpture has now been traced, from its first feeble essays in the infancy of the art, to the noble productions of its splendid maturity. A

less grateful task has likewise been accomplished, in marking the gradations of decline to its worse than second childhood, in the latter part of the last century. But here the advances of decay were to be arrested, and vigour and beauty again soon to be restored. In a remote district of Italy, a future renovator had even then commenced his career; and the attention must now be directed to the life and labours of CANOVA.

CHAPTER III.

Birth and parentage of Canova—Left to the care of his grandmother—Anecdotes, character and attainments of his grandfather Pasino—Juvenile studies and amusements of Canova—Remarks on biography—Canova becomes assistant to his grandfather—Anecdotes of his introduction to the family of his first patron—Description of his youthful person and manners—Studies carried on under his first master—Anecdotes of his state of mind—Observations on genius—Death of his master—Canova prosecutes his studies at Venice.

VENICE, whose schools of architecture and of design are justly celebrated among the earliest nurseries of modern art, claims likewise, if not as a native, at least as a subject and a pupil, the great restorer of living sculpture. Among the former and more splendid dependencies of this once powerful republic, is the obscure village of Possagno, situate amid the recesses of the hills of Asolano, where these form the last undulations of

the Venetian Alps, as they subside into the plains of Treviso. A place, thus secluded by nature from observation, and hitherto unnoticed from its own insignificance, boasts the birth of the greatest artist of this, or perhaps, every thing considered, of any preceding age. In Possagno, on the morning of the 1st of November 1757, was born Antonio Canova. The mud-walled cabins of an alpine village witnessed, during the first twelve years of existence, the dawnings of that mind, whose productions now constitute the most precious treasures of the noblest palaces.

Nor were the disadvantages of a remote and obscure locality compensated by the possession of wealth, or the lustre of parentage. Pietro [1], the father of our Antonio, followed the occupation of a stone-cutter; while his mother was in nowise distinguished from the simple females of her native

[1] In some biographical sketches published many years ago in the Italian Journals, he is improperly named Francisco, an error which has been copied into the still more erroneous accounts of travellers.

hamlet. Of these humble parents, Canova was the only child.

At the period of his son's birth, Pietro still resided under the paternal roof, and continued without a separate establishment till 1760, when he died at an early age. The premature occurrence of this event precludes extensive information concerning him; nor, from the few hints that are preserved, does there seem cause for regretting the absence of more lengthened detail. He appears to have been a man of melancholy habits, and of a weakly constitution; not remarkable for talents of any kind, and in this respect greatly inferior to his father Pasino; with whom, either as assistant, or in partnership, he had always continued to work [1].

A few months after the demise of her former husband, the mother of our artist entered again into a state of wedlock, and settled in the neighbouring village of Cres-

[1] The family of Canova is said to have furnished stone-cutters to the village of Possagno for several ages.

pano. The name of her new spouse was Sartori; but of what condition or occupation does not clearly appear. The only offspring of these second nuptials was a son, who still survives, the Abbot Giovanni Battista Sartori Canova.

This brother was the object of Canova's tenderest attachment, whom he patronized and supported in early life, and constituted his heir at death; confiding to him the completion of several designs in which he was then engaged [1].

When his mother removed to Crespano, on the occasion of her second marriage, Canova, then about three years old, remained at Possagno under the protection of his grandfather, Pasino. Thus, at an age when

[1] Il fratello d. Gio. Battista Sartori Canova, *erede universale* ed esecutore delle mie disposizioni, è costituito nel diritto e nella liberta di fare quelle eccezioni, o alterazioni alle mie testimentarie disposizioni, &c.—"My brother, John Baptist Sartori Canova, *sole heir* and executor of my dispositions, is invested with the power and liberty of making these exceptions and alterations in my testamentary dispositions," &c. Extract from Canova's Will—Introduction.

he could scarce yet lisp their names, was he deprived of both parents [1]. This loss, so generally irreparable, was most amply supplied by the tender care of Catterina Ceccato, his paternal grandmother. As if presaging the eminence which her grandson was destined to attain,

> With future hope she oft would gaze
> Fond, on his little, early ways;

and to the recollections of this attachment, are we indebted for many anecdotes of his almost infant years. She nursed his delicate frame with the kindest assiduity; watched his progress with the most affectionate solicitude; and directed his childish acquirements in the best manner her own limited information permitted. The good old matron lived to see the object of her early care prove worthy of it: and Canova, than whom no one ever more warmly cherished the genial influence of every social, every benevolent feeling, enjoyed one of the best

[1] "*Quasi ancor balbettante,*" says Canova, in one of his letters.

and purest of pleasures,—that of repaying former benefits. After the death of his grandfather, as soon as he could afford her an asylum such as age required, and gratitude would wish to offer, he brought the kind Catterina to reside with him at Rome; and his friends still remember, that to make the evening of her life decline in peace was a care ever nearest his heart: —How amiable does genius appear, when exercised in the gentle offices of the heart. What a noble dignity do virtue and talents mutually lend to each other! The sculptor of the Graces and of the Perseus excites not greater admiration, than the same individual, thus engaged in administering to the happiness and comfort of an aged relative [1].

[1] Canova sculptured the bust of his grandmother, in the dress of her native province, which was the same as that of Titian's mother, as seen in the pictures of that master. This bust he kept in his own apartments. Pointing it out one day to an individual with whom the author had the pleasure of being acquainted at Rome, and to whom he is indebted for much valuable information, Canova said with emotion, "That is a

Pasino Canova, the grandfather of our artist, was distinguished by a character of facetiousness and of good nature, that rendered him extremely popular amongst his equals, over whom he exercised a species of ascendancy; while the more valuable qualities of skill and diligence in his occupation, recommended him to the employment, and even to the regard of his superiors. His acquirements, considering the situation in which he had always been placed, and the slender means of attainment he had enjoyed, seem to have been far from despicable. He possessed some knowledge of architecture;—designed with neatness and facility;—and shewed considerable taste in the execution of ornamental works in stucco, and sometimes in marble. His performances

piece which I greatly value;—it is the likeness of her to whom I owe as much as it is possible for one human being to owe to another;" adding, with a smile, "You ladies are usually solicitous about appearances. You see my grandmother is dressed nearly as Titian's mother is represented by that artist; but, unless affection render me a partial judge, my relation is by much the finer old woman."—Letter to the Author.

in the latter material, are still to be seen in the altars and chapels of several churches in the adjacent villages. Some of these are likewise incrusted with the more rare and valuable species of stone. He is said also to have executed relievos, and even statues in marble with passable skill. Of the latter, indeed, a specimen still remains, in the figures of two Angels which ornament the high altar in the church of Monfumo [1]. But these, as will afterwards appear, were executed from models the composition of his grandson.

This extent of the old man's knowledge, is most probably exaggerated by the benevolence of friends, and more especially by excusable partiality in the accounts of his early instructor, subsequently given by his grandson. This may reasonably be inferred from the circumstance of the latter being placed, at a very tender age, under a different master, a change al-

[1] A village, or rather town, at some distance from Passagno.

together unnecessary, if the system of instruction to be obtained at home had been thus comprehensive. Pasino, however, certainly possessed talents and ingenuity in his own limited sphere. He appears to have been one of those self-taught artists, whom the necessities of a situation remote from large cities and better assistance, have occasionally caused to be employed in departments rather above their own proper occupation; and whose natural shrewdness has enabled them, profiting by these opportunities, to acquire some skill in various branches of collateral art. A stone-cutter, as in the present instance, may thus at times aspire to the functions of the sculptor.

Be this as it may, the memory of the intelligent and good-humoured Pasino merits our esteem, for his attention to the early education of the subject of these memoirs. The history of genius is too frequently only a sad narrative of intellectual energies repressed by penury, or of prevailing predilections thwarted in the

choice of a congenial profession. Canova suffered under all the privations inflicted by poverty; but the very narrowness of his circumstances produced the melancholy advantage of being, from childhood, trained to an occupation at least remotely connected with sculpture. In the little Antonio, his grandfather contemplated, not without pride, the support of the name, and his own destined assistant and successor. The old man regarded his profession with fond partiality, and resolved that no care should be wanting to render his grandson accomplished in the knowledge which he himself possessed. Whatever of decided inclination, could at so early an age have developed itself in the mind of the future sculptor, the taste and the acquirements of his grandfather thus sufficed in the first instance to cherish—a most important object in the formation of what is termed genius, and for some years, might direct. Almost from the moment that Tonin's [1] hand could

[1] Tonin is the provincial diminution for Antonio, and very commonly employed in the Venetian States.

hold a pencil, this affectionate instructor began to initiate him in the principles of drawing,—justly regarding this as the best means of acquiring proficiency in other branches. Considerably later, but still at a very tender age, he commenced executing models in clay; and the little round of his infantine attainments may be considered as complete, when he had learned to fashion the larger fragments of marble cuttings into ornaments of various kinds. These productions of early ingenuity represented inanimate objects only; and he had reached a much later period of life before attempting the imitation of the human figure, in any more refractory material than the soft substances used in modelling. Of these his primitive labours in sculpture, two small shrines of Carrara marble, of which, one is likewise inlaid with coloured stones, both executed in Canova's ninth year, yet remain in the villa of his first patron [1].

[1] "Tabernacoli piccioli" are the words used by Falier the Younger, who adds, "coi quali giuocolammo

Thus were passed the years of childhood, in occupations that might be termed studies, when compared with the manner in which this season of life is usually spent;—studies tending to the formation of decided aims and tastes, if they did not terminate in actual acquirement. The moral influences of this judicious training were accordingly soon apparent. Attention was never the effect of compulsion, or of confinement to certain pursuits, but seemed to others, as to the individual himself, the result of natural inclination; and a casual or superficial observer would have pronounced, that Canova was formed by nature with dispositions for that art, in which he afterwards excelled. The society, or the sports of the other villagers possessed no attractions; and the "sullen Tonin," for so was he styled by the petulant levity of his youthful compeers, was constantly to

insieme nei diletti dell' innocenza,"—with which we amused ourselves in the delights of innocence,—viz. young Canova and himself.

be found, either in his grandfather's workshop, or hanging at the side, listening to the instructions, and conning the legendary lore of his grandmother. Sorely to the annoyance of the good old lady, the evidences of her grandson's attachment were generally but too visible in the marks of tiny hands, impressed in modelling clay, which her side drapery usually disclosed. Her tales and ballads, indeed, presented an allurement that frequently drew her young charge from his favourite employment, and seemed for a time to hold with these, over his enthusiastic and ardent mind, divided sway. Even in after life this taste survived. His friends yet recollect the pleasure he would often express on hearing similar compositions, and the animation with which he would occasionally recite, in the rich and expressive dialect of his native province, from the stores his infant memory had thus collected.

It is an observation frequently repeated, that the lives of men of genius rarely abound in materials for the biographer, or,

consequently, in interest for the reader. Nor can it be denied that disappointment is often experienced, on perusing the memoirs even of those whose productions have been most admired. But does not this, in the majority of instances, proceed either from unreasonable expectations, or injudicious selection?

From extraordinary eminence in reputation, the reader is apt to anticipate events in life equally uncommon, without reflecting on the means which, in the career now spoken of, must have principally conduced to this elevation. The loftier powers of intellect necessarily require, in order to their full development and vigorous exercise, retirement from the more active and gayer scenes of life. According to the peculiar nature of the pursuit, a large portion of existence must be spent in the contemplative seclusion of the library, or in the retired industry of the studio. To him whose days are thus passed in the constant pursuit of mental excellence, life can seldom be expected to abound in striking vi-

cissitude, surprising incident, or varied adventure. Time glides along unmarked by events, leaving on record little more than the useful though unobtrusive annals of knowledge increased, judgment strengthened, or errors reformed.

If, however, disappointment sometimes arise from the paucity of materials, it is more frequently occasioned by want of discrimination in selecting from those which are actually presented. The biography of an individual, illustrious in letters or in art, ought chiefly to exhibit a correct appreciation of intellectual capabilities and acquirements, with details of those exertions or exercises which have led to eminence. Nor will the general feeling or utility of the impressions, as seems to have been apprehended, be thus weakened. Genius, like Virtue, is universal in the influence of its example. By identifying its possessor with the history and progress of his art, not only this is illustrated and improved, but every department of knowledge or of taste—of imagination or of science derives

more or less advantage. To mark the first feeble indications of superior powers;—to watch the scions of intellect in their increasing vigour;—to trace that course of discipline and of study, which has conducted through successive gradations of improvement;—to ascertain those causes which have principally aided in the acquisition of comparative excellence, must prove not only highly instructive, but generally interesting. Such details, when fully and accurately given, constitute the best school of experience, by encouraging the exertions, while they direct the efforts, of youthful talent. The lofty and ardent aspirations of emulative minds thus meet responsive glowings, in the exalted aims and noble enthusiasm which once animated congenial souls. The friendly light which guides—the inspiring flame which creates living worth, are thus kindled at the pyre of departed genius.

In perusing the memoirs of Canova, reflections similar to the preceding must frequently occur to the reader. The life of this eminent artist will be found, not in-

deed devoid of incident; yet the principal events almost exclusively derive interest from their relation with, and influence on his peculiar pursuits. If early in his career he had great difficulties to contend against — many obstacles to surmount, the estimation of these is important, chiefly as viewed in connection with his professional progress, or as illustrating the state of cotemporary taste, and the then existing condition of the fine arts. If his subsequent advancement was rapid, and the disparity great between his original station and the situation finally occupied in society, these vicissitudes effected no change in the private habits or character of the man, and are to be considered as merely secondary occurrences in a life passed entirely in studious seclusion, and assiduously devoted to the attainment of still higher excellence. Raised to elevated rank — loaded with honours — filling Europe with his renown, the workshop still continued the only theatre of Canova's ambition; and the narrative of his life must

acquire its chief interest and utility, from attention to those silent and unobtrusive operations of industry and of genius, which formed, by the labours of a single individual, a new and brilliant epoch in the history of art.

Various causes thus combine in recommending, on the present occasion, an endeavour to display the studies and talents, to examine the works and intellectual energies of the artist, rather than merely an attempt to give an amusing relation of the few events unconnected with these, which have marked the unpretending life of the individual. Accounts of those illustrious characters who have extended the boundaries of knowledge, or multiplied the resources of elegance, prove instructive, according as they enable more fully to appreciate their mental endowments; and ought to enlarge on this subject, in proportion as, by mental exertions, they have deserved well of mankind. Such a method it is therefore most necessary to ob-

serve in the present instance, where these exertions have consummated an important and splendid reformation in taste; where the example has not only shaken the influence of models too long revered,—but where the works will serve as guides for ages to come;—where the effects are thus identified, not only with the state of present, but, in some measure, with the history of past, and the anticipations of future art. If for a moment, the narrative glance from the pursuits of the artist, it will be to expatiate on a theme no less pleasing —the benevolence of the man;—to exhibit in the same mind, the noble union of virtue and of genius.

> "But let not sculpture—painting—poesy,
> Or they, the masters of these mighty spells,
> Detain us; our first homage is to virtue [1]."

As young Canova continued to advance in years and improvement, the workshop ceased to become merely his play-ground, and its occupations the amusements of

[1] Italy; a Poem.

his voluntary application. It was necessary to think early and more seriously of that profession, by which he was to earn his future livelihood. Accordingly, soon after the completion of his ninth year, Antonio appears to have been employed constantly under his grandfather; regularly assisting in those labours for which his strength and capacity were fitted. During the intervals, when not thus engaged, his favourite pursuits of drawing and modelling were resumed with increased ardour, and it may be presumed with corresponding success. This, his early proficiency in drawing at least, would indicate; in other respects his attainments could be only very remotely connected with future and more elevated studies. In this situation he remained for about three years, destined, in all seeming probability, to bury his talents in a humble and laborious occupation, and confined to the obscure precincts of his native village. But the favourable crisis, which was to call him from seclusion, and to place within his reach in-

struction and acquisitions, to which he never could otherwise have aspired, was now near at hand.

The country round Possagno presents considerable beauty of natural scenery, and lying near the Alps, enjoys during the heats of summer refreshing breezes from the mountains. These advantages render this a desirable situation whence to retire from the confinement and bustle of a city. At the period of which we now speak, there were accordingly in this vicinity several villas of the Venetian nobility, in which their opulent proprietors were then accustomed to reside during some months of each season. In the repairs, or minor embellishments of these retreats, Pasino Canova, recommended by his superior ingenuity, which precluded the necessity of sending artists from the capital, was frequently employed. On these occasions he was now generally accompanied by his youthful assistant.

Among the residences in which they were thus most commonly engaged, and at

no great distance from the village of Possagno, is the *villa d'Asolo*, contiguous to the little town of the same name, and belonging to the Patrician family *Falier*, or *Falieri*, of Venice. Signor Giovanni Falier, the proprietor, and head of the family, entertained a particular regard for the grandfather of our artist, the effect of long acquaintance, and of the old man's good qualities. No season passed without several visits from Pasino; and he was often invited to spend a few days at the villa, even when the assistance of his skill was not required [1].

[1] "Era mio padre molto affezionato a Pasino, e comechè faceto fosse, e gioviale, e non lontana la nostra villeggiatura, in villa d'Asolo da Possagno, gradiva di tenerlo in que' tempi di frequente con se." Memorie, &c. dal Sig. G. Falier, p. 8. This is Giuseppe Falier, the early friend of Canova, whose authority in every thing relative to the youthful studies of the latter is of the utmost value. His pamphlet extends only to thirty-two pages; but, in almost every instance, the author has found its statements corroborated by his own private letters and information. The Signor Falier is still alive, and much esteemed at Venice. He possesses several very early productions of his friend,

By this means young Canova was first introduced to the senator Falier, who afterwards became his most zealous patron; by the whole family, likewise, he was soon recognised as a universal favourite. Between him and Giuseppe Falier, the younger son, in particular, who were both at the happy age yet unconscious of the artificial distinctions of rank, a friendship then commenced, which terminated only with the life of the former. Few indeed could at this time know the amiable and unassuming boy, without feeling an affection for him. His light and graceful figure —his finely formed and expressive countenance, beaming at once with sensibility and fire, interested at first sight; while the unaffected simplicity of his address—the modest diffidence, but not awkward timidity of his manner—his goodness of heart, and

and a numerous collection of his letters; which, however, as described by one who perused them, are more interesting from the name of the writer, than from their matter.

ingenuous disposition, could not fail to improve these favourable impressions [1].

The friendly regard he had long entertained for old Pasino, joined to the interest which the boy himself had excited,—while a convenient opportunity presented of placing him in the way of receiving better instruction, induced the Signor Falier to receive Canova at this period under his immediate protection. He thought there appeared in the youthful artist talents that promised much. A little encouragement and more extensive tuition would elicit these, or, at least, render him better qualified to succeed in his present occupation. At all events, the ardent passion which he betrayed for the arts deserved to be cherished, while the qualities of

[1] E chi poteva conoscerlo anche nella prima eta sua e non interessarsi di lui? La sensibilità del suo cuore, la vivacita del suo spirito, la sincerità, la semplicità, la docilita, &c. impegnarono mio padre a prenderlo in distinta cura, &c. Falier, p. 9.; Paravin. &c. Letters to the Author.

his heart merited encouragement and assistance.

Such were the events which introduced Canova to his earliest patron, and such were the motives which induced Falier to extend his protection to the youth. It has indeed been asserted by an Italian writer, and from him copied by various others, that a mere accident was the occasion of this interesting connection. At a festival, it is said, which was celebrated in the villa Falier, and attended by a numerous assembly of Venetian nobility, the domestics had neglected to provide an ornament for the dessert, without discovering the omission, till the moment it was required to be supplied. Fearing lest they should on this account incur their master's displeasure, and being in the greatest terror, they applied to Pasino, who then happened to be engaged at work in the house, accompanied by his grandson. The old man's invention could suggest no remedy;—his youthful associate, seeing the necessity of the case, desired some butter to be provided; and from this

material presently carved a lion, with such skill and effect, that, on being presented at table, it excited the attention and received the applause of all present. So singular an ornament naturally produced inquiry. The servants were questioned;—the whole was disclosed, and Tonin Canova declared to be the contriver. Tonin was immediately called for; and blushing, — half reluctant, apprehensive of having done something amiss, was ushered into the brilliant assembly;—when, to his great relief, instead of rebuke, he received praises and caresses from the whole company. From this circumstance, it is stated, his talents for sculpture were first discovered by the Senator Falier, who from thenceforth resolved to encourage them, by patronizing their possessor [1].

[1] *Memorie Trivigiane sulle opere di disegno, del Padre Federici, 2 tom. quarto.* A work of no great merit, but which nevertheless has, on this occasion, been very generally followed. In his admirable "Catalogo Ragionato" of Books on the Works of Art, Cicognara designates this "due tome in uno," with no

The anecdote may very possibly be true; nay, there are many reasons for crediting its veracity, but certainly the circumstance which it records was not, either the occasion of Canova's first introduction to the family of Falier, or the cause of the subsequent patronage which he experienced. The connection was in truth more honourable both to the patron and to the object of his bounty. It was the result not of a fortuitous occurrence,—nor founded on a momentary feeling, but proceeded from previous and long-established intercourse, from a conviction on the one side that there were on the other talents, and especially a disposition which merited protection.

Some months previous to this period of the narrative, which has now conducted Antonio to the completion of his twelfth

other remark. Falier expressly says, " Non si allega la storiella del Leoncino di burro, asserita dal P. Federici nelle sue *Memorie Trivigiane*, perche, se anche vera, essa non fu certo il motivo dell interesse presone da mio Padre."

year, *Giuseppe Bernardi*, surnamed *Toretto*, a Venetian sculptor, had settled at the *villa di Pagnano*, a short distance from Asolo. Bernardi had studied sculpture under his uncle Giuseppe Toretto, distinguished by the appellation of the Elder, by whom he had been adopted, and whose name, in consequence, he had assumed. This artist was considered as one of the most skilful then in Venice, and had fixed his temporary residence at Pagnano, in order to finish on the spot various works of embellishment, in the prosecution of which he was then engaged. Bernardi, or, as he is more generally called, Toretto, had formerly executed several statues, as ornaments for the villa d'Asolo, in the grounds of which these works, along with others of his different cotemporaries, are still to be seen. On this account, Falier was not only well acquainted with his merits as a sculptor, but was in turn regarded by the artist as a friend and patron. The present, therefore, appeared a most favourable

opportunity for placing his interesting *protegé* in a situation to acquire the best instruction in the profession, while his tender age would still enjoy the superintending care of relatives and friends. Induced by these considerations, the benevolent senator not only settled Canova under the tuition of Toretto, but also recommended him to this new master with the same anxiety as if he had been his own son [1]. Nor was Toretto inattentive to his charge, but seems to have paid every attention to a pupil, whom he quickly discovered to possess no ordinary talents, and whose gentle manners, united to a docile disposition, soon gained his affection and esteem.

During nearly two succeeding years that were passed at Pagnano, Canova, ever assiduous in the pursuit of improvement, exhibited the same unceasing industry which distinguished his future life; and which,

[1] "L'eccesiva passione che brillava nel giovanetto Canova per il disegno, lo determinò, non dirò à *raccomandarlo*, ma a *consegnarlo* al Toretto *come se figlio suo*." Falier.

whatever may be the common and vague notions respecting the omnipotence of native powers in the production of works of talent, must ever constitute the best assurance of anticipated eminence, even in genius. Many drawings and models, the fruits of this application, are still preserved in the Falier family, as also in the collections of various individuals in Venice and elsewhere. Among those possessed by the former, are two drawings in chalk, representing one a Venus, and the other a Bacchus, both executed only a few days after their author had been placed with Toretto, and valued, therefore, as shewing the degree of perfection which, under his grandfather, he had been able to attain. These, considered as the performances of a boy not exceeding twelve years of age, from the boldness of style, and correctness of outline, are said to discover very considerable progress in this department. Indeed, there is reason to believe, that the only valuable acquisition which resulted from old Pasino's instructions, consisted in a ready use of the

pencil, as, during their continuance, the really useful studies of his grandson had been confined chiefly to drawing. It does not appear whether those in question were taken from casts, or from other drawings of the figures which they represent; but they are stated to have been executed in surprisingly short intervals of study, snatched from more laborious and less grateful employment.

The works, however, which during this period afforded the greatest pleasure to the friends of young Antonio, and which excited the utmost surprise in his master, were the models, in clay, of two Angels, executed during a short absence of Toretto, and without assistance from any similar figures. These, therefore, are the first really original labours of Canova's hand. Being finished in secrecy and in haste, they were then placed in a conspicuous situation in the workshop, against the expected return of his master. The hopes and fears with which his instructor's looks were

watched may easily be imagined. When at length the anxiously longed-for crisis arrived; and Toretto's eye rested on these new creations of his trembling pupil; he is said to have remained in astonishment, exclaiming, "Ecco un lavor veramente maraviglioso [1]." He could scarcely be persuaded that a work so perfect had been executed by the boy, who, all former apprehensions now dissipated, stood smiling before him, and enjoying his surprise [2].

Soon after this occurrence, that is, in the second year of his present engagement, and the fourteenth of his age, Canova appears to have made his first essay in the representation of the human form in marble. It would seem, however, that this circumstance marks only a higher and more difficult species of amusement, rather than an advanced gradation in regular study. His

[1] "This is in truth a most astonishing work."

[2] From these models, Pasino, as already mentioned, executed his best work, the two Angels in *pietra dura*, which ornament the high altar at Monfumo.

first efforts in this department were, in fact, the employment merely of such hours as were not engaged in the more mechanical labours of his profession. These performances were reserved as presents for his friends, and were neither countenanced by the orders, nor assisted by the directions of his master; while from the diminutive size of those that remain, such labours could but little aid his progress in sculpture [1].

The years passed at Pagnano were often recalled by Canova, even in the height of reputation, as forming, in many respects, one of the happiest periods of his life. The kindly feelings of his generous nature were soothed and cherished by uninterrupted intercourse with those he loved. He was surrounded by his friends, almost in the bosom of his own family, and engaged in studies most congenial to his mind; while, at the same time, he saw his progress prove a constant source of pleasure to those who

[1] Two of these statues, about a foot high, and in alabaster of Florence, are still in the villa Falier.

then composed all he knew of the world, and whom alone he could desire to please. During the winter, when the family of his patron returned from their villa at Asolo to Venice, he still enjoyed the company of his friend, young Falier, who, for the purposes of education, remained with a clergyman resident in the vicinity [1]. With a companion whom he so much loved, and in visiting his grandmother and the good old Pasino, were spent every holiday, and every interval not devoted to study. Even at this early age, the grand outlines of his character such as with little change it remained through life, were already impressed. Open—sincere—ingenuous, he was himself unconscious of dissimulation, and could hardly conceive deceit to exist in others. Full of vivacity in the society of his friends, he delighted them at once, by the originality of his observations, and by the native elegance of a delicate, though

[1] This was the Abbate Matteo Valentinis, who is designated "Di chiara Memoria;" which eulogy, as an eminent philologist, he seems to have merited.

still untutored mind. Among strangers, from a natural timidity, which subsequent intercourse with mankind never entirely overcame, he was reserved, yet seldom failed to strike observers as possessing a mind of no ordinary stamp, or to fix those impressions, even on a casual interview, which common men never leave.

On an important subject, the state of his intellectual powers during this period, various authentic memorials still remain, either in the recollections of his friends, or in those confidential letters, which Canova, in a few instances, and on earnest solicitation afterwards wrote, when every circumstance of his early life had been rendered interesting, by the well-earned fame of his maturer years [1]. His mind appears to have been endowed, or rather oppressed by feelings, which seemed to require a peculiar language for their expression;—feelings which he could neither comprehend nor subdue; which were constantly urging him

[1] From one of these to a very dear friend, the present account is taken.

forward to some imaginary goal of superiority,—to some undefined exertion, the origin or object of which he could not even to himself either develop or explain. "He often felt," to borrow his own simple but expressive words, "as if he could have started on foot with a velocity to outstrip the wind, but without knowing whither to direct his steps; and when activity could no longer be supported, he would have desired to lie down and die." He would often gaze, said one of his early friends to the author, on the evening clouds, and on the mountains, from behind which their floating masses seemed to advance, as if he wished to mingle with their gilded forms,—to range unconfined the azure outline of the distant Alps,—or to penetrate the dim futurity beyond. At other times he would hurry to his drawings—or models—or last performance, examine the objects again and again, then leave the place in seeming disappointment, and like one apparently in search of something which had not been found.

What a striking portrait of a mind gift-

ed with no common powers, yet ignorant how to wield its faculties, do these simple traits present!—of a mind superior to its own situation, restrained by its means of information, and dissatisfied with its own exertions. In those high-toned desires,—those nobly ambitious aspirations after some dimly-descried eminence—some undefined excellence, we trace the workings of a vigorous imagination, already more expanded than the taste and judgment destined to correct, or the powers of mechanical performance which realize its creations. In the incipient unfoldings of the judgment, on the other hand, and in the commencing improvement of taste, we discover the origin of that dissatisfaction with the results of his own labours, forming to the youthful artist so fruitful a source of inquietude. This inequality between the powers of conceiving, of executing and of judging, will be found to continue in a certain degree through life, and to constitute the discriminating qualities in the genius of different individuals, not only in

the higher departments of art, but also in the nobler walks of literature. Frequently, indeed, these powers seem to interchange energies, as respects the ultimate supremacy of judgment over the early precocity of imagination; a change which may account for that discrepancy so often found to exist between the maturer, and more youthful performances of the same intellect. In proportion as these faculties of judging and of creating, which may be called essential, as necessary to constitute exalted genius in all its spheres of operation, are mutually subservient,—and as they are happily united with those talents which, dependent on rules, and confined to peculiar modes of expression, may be termed mechanical—the efforts of the individual will attain those approximations to a standard of ideal perfection, that form in his art comparative excellence. Notwithstanding the discordance, as respects these attainments, now exhibited in Canova's mind, and which apparently throws him behind many, who, in his own profession, and at his present

age, have shewn great forwardness in particular merits; yet in the acquisition of this mental harmony, in which superiority really consists,—this agreement of the understanding and the imagination, which unites grandeur of effect with truth of detail,—which combines the fire of enthusiasm with the correctness of nature, he has been preceded by few.

In those ardent sensibilities, however, we discover merely the indetermined workings of a powerful and aspiring mind. We perceive nothing that tends to individuality of pursuit; we observe no indications of a certain natural disposition, fitting for one sphere of action only, and irresistibly attracting towards some peculiar mode of exertion; we trace nothing, in fine, which in Canova marked the future artist, rather than the poet,—far less which shewed the sculptor rather than the painter. In truth, the idea commonly entertained of genius, that it is a mental volition paramount in its influence to circumstances, and specific in its tendency, independent of culture, appears

to be an opinion not less erroneous, though more generous, than the opposing supposition of primary equality in mental endowments, and of subsequent superiority being the result of education,—a notion which every day's experience disproves. The truth in this, as in most other similar instances, seems "to touch the two extremities [1]."

Without doubt, nature does not bestow her gifts on all minds with the same unsparing liberality. If, in this respect, however, there be disparity, neither has she implanted in some favoured breasts certain transcendant qualities, which convey an almost intuitive science, and form as it were by a happy necessity, for particular employments, studies, and pursuits. There is recognised a constitutional and a high superiority in the general mental vigour and activity of those who are justly styled men of genius: But an original pre-eminence in particular talents, or a predisposi-

[1] Burke's Speeches.

tion for certain modes of their exertion, independent of external aid or of foreign bias, is denied. The supremacy of education, on the other hand, or, to use Lord Bacon's definition, "of the circumstances in which, during early life, the individual has been placed [1]," is asserted, in predisposing for, and in leading to that particular eminence, by moulding this general aptitude to a specific purpose—to a definite end. Hence those who are termed men of universal genius, have rarely attained an elevation above mediocrity in any one pursuit. Nature, indeed, has performed her part; but education has neglected to bend this general disposition for excelling, with full and undivided force, to a precise object. Genius, therefore, is here considered as merely another expression for the energies of a highly and equably gifted intellect, exerted in a determinate manner, to which education, in its extended sense, has not only trained, but has from the first direct-

[1] See his Essays.

ed them. Genius is to the mind what sensibility is to the heart: both dispose to receive the noblest impressions; but as implying simply a state or condition, neither exerts any power in selection. Without an object, the former lacerates the bosom by restless wishes and disquieting desires; while the hopes and aspirings of the latter are indeed always elevated, but vague and distracting, till, by external means, the current of enthusiasm be turned into some certain channel,—which alone can give to the most accomplished mind decision and character, or crown its efforts with ultimate success.

The same superiority of mental endowments—the same exalted perceptions—those longings after, and often purposed enterprise of something noble and excellent, that announce the youth of genius,—and which in retirement, amid books, nature, and the fine arts, produce the philosopher, the poet, or the artist, would, under opposite circumstances, blaze forth in

the legislator, the hero, or the statesman[1]. The sceptre of genius still continues the same rod of universal empire, although to nerve the arm which bears it, education must confine its mighty influence to separate provinces. Whether, grasped by science, it trace the viewless orbits of revolving worlds; or, in the hand of art, it marshal the fair creations of magic hues and lovely forms; or, with poesy, command the tears of sympathy, and the bursts of passion,—still it is wielded by minds similarly constituted; and they are but the varied efforts of the same powers, which thus alternately subject to its sway both nature and the human soul. Thus the capacious faculties which, in Michael Angelo, embraced and adorned every region in the world of art, were intrinsically the same with those, that, under other circumstances, and by a different application, in

[1] Music alone seems to be the only attainment which is denied to well-directed industry, and to be dependent on original mental and physical qualities, which are not to be acquired; but even here, application may perform much.

Galileo [1], and in Newton, explored the mysterious laws which, from planets to their atoms, regulate the universe. Thus, had not a more sacred volume inspired the pencil of Raffael [2],—Italy also might have gloried in her Iliad; and had the Paradise not existed,—Milton might have been the Canova of his age.

The principal events that marked the early progress of the last named of these illustrious characters, viewed in connection with the state of mind which gave rise to the preceding observations, still farther illustrate the import of the latter. From infancy Canova had exhibited that general mental activity, which it is maintained constitutes the only original distinction between individual intellects; and which, by succeeding culture, is not only matured into ability,—but converted into inclination

[1] Galileo made very rapid progress in painting before he abandoned the fine arts for the study of philosophy.

[2] Alluding to the subjects of his most celebrated works being taken from sacred writ.

for particular studies. The circumstances, also, in which from the dawn of reason he found himself placed, and the whole course of his early education, tended not merely to give, but to enforce a bias for his peculiar profession. During the first twelve years of life, indeed, it may be said, that while with his grandfather, amusement as much as instruction was pursued; and certainly those boyish exertions, with their resulting acquirements, could, of themselves, little avail the attainment of future eminence. But one of the most valuable ends of education—the formation of tastes and of habits, was thus accomplished at an age when these can most readily be implanted, and when nothing else of equal importance, can be effectually inculcated or perfectly comprehended. The surest foundation of future superiority was thus laid, in transforming the inclination to imitate which children usually display, into habits of decided industry, and in creating a love for the art, which in after life direct-

ed to this one object the undivided energy of his powerful mind.

Under Toretto, the advances of Canova, especially during his fourteenth year, were, in many respects, considerable. Notwithstanding the kindness of his master, however, a very great proportion of time must of necessity have been devoted to occupations, of slight tendency to promote advancement in the nobler walks of art. His age,—the views in the first instance proposed of his merely attaining superior skill and dexterity in the subordinate parts, joined to the slender experience antecedently acquired, occasioned his being employed much more frequently in the capacity of a mechanical assistant, than in the more elevated pursuits requisite to the student of a liberal art. The studies more immediately tending to form the artist, were thus confined chiefly to hours of necessary relaxation from manual labour. In the meantime, his powers were unfolding themselves more rapidly, accompanied with higher

ideas of excellence, than his previous knowledge or present situation yielded the means either of exercising or of gratifying. In the consequent state of impatience and anxiety, implied by his words and feelings, application was unceasing, from that "enthusiastic desire to excel," so justly regarded by Reynolds as "the first thing required to excel[1]." This desire of excellence, however, was indefinite, and therefore obviously independent of any original attachment to a particular mode in its attainment. This enthusiasm was nothing more than the same generous ambition, which fires every superior mind; and so far from indicating the influence of any natural inclination or exclusive capacity for sculpture, that it excited only undecided hopes and wishes beyond the prospect of success in the art. In such cases, when the mind is irresolute whether to continue or to abandon its efforts, former habitudes

[1] See "Discourse XIV., on the Character of Gainsborough," &c.

of thought or of action finally prevail; and the acquired habits and tastes of early education assume the semblance and produce the effects of what is termed genius, or natural disposition. After these paroxysms of fruitless despondency, or of causeless exultation, Canova returned to his drawings—to his models,—found them imperfect,—still they afforded the only exercise in which the ebullitions of emotion could be calmed; and both education and circumstances had rendered superiority in art the sole means of attaining that eminence which he courted.

The engagements which hitherto had detained him at Pagnano being now finished, Toretto, after an absence of nearly three years, determined on re-establishing his residence in Venice. Here he died a few months after his return, worn out rather by infirmities than by age. This, in some measure, may be regarded as an unfortunate event for his youthful pupil, who, there is reason to believe, would therwise have found a future settlement in the capital, less a matter of obligation,

if not of difficulty. At least, he would have enjoyed the advantage of prosecuting his studies on the same principles as they had been commenced; in which respect a change was by no means desirable, as in the then state of Venetian art, notwithstanding the deficiencies of his master, it could not have been for the better. Toretto had always expressed to his patron great commendation of Antonio's talents and docility; and latterly, had frequently urged the necessity of better instruction than could now be obtained in the obscure place of his nativity. As the best proof of his own esteem, he had previously declared him his son by adoption, with permission to bear the name; a privilege which was never assumed, and farther than as a pleasing mark of approbation, productive of no subsequent advantage [1]. Canova,

[1] There is something extremely agreeable in this filiation of pupils,—a practice which appears to have originated among the Greeks; so that in many instances it is doubtful whether sons or scholars are meant by the words employed.

however, through life continued to respect the memory, and even seems to have admired the talents of this his early and indulgent master.

Of this affectionate remembrance, an instance occurred a short time before the lamented death of this truly great artist. Being at Asolo, on a visit to the friend of his youth the younger son of his first patron, a walk one morning was proposed through the grounds of the villa Falier where they then were. On coming to one of those statues, which, more than half a century before, had been executed by his old master Toretto, he expressed an earnest desire to examine them all, one by one. In the observation of each he passed some time, apparently with great delight; and in commendation had always something pleasing to remark to the friends by whom he was accompanied. Arriving at the last, he concluded by saying, "*Eppure han del merito! —Veda, veda come hanno una certa grazietta che le rende interessanti.*"—"Indeed, indeed, they all possess merit: observe,—see

how every one has a certain gracefulness, that renders it interesting." "But," adds the relator of the anecdote, "*ma chi v'ha che abbia mai inteso il Canova dir male di chę che sia*[1]*?*" A bold question, doubtless, yet one which might be demanded with perfect confidence, and without fear of provoking a reply, injurious either to the acknowledged candour, or the universal benevolence of that amiable man.

It would appear, that in patronising the early studies of Canova, the original intention of Falier was not to extend this assistance beyond what might simply qualify him for continuing, under superior advantages, the business of his grandfather. With this design, he had been recommended to the care of Toretto, in the hope, that during the temporary residence of the latter in these parts, the youth might become,—not an accomplished artist, but an expert workman. On the return of the master to Venice, therefore, the aspiring pupil found

[1] But who is there that ever heard Canova speak ill of any one whomsoever? Falier.

himself, after an absence of nearly two years, once more on the point of being established in the workshop of Pasino,—a second time, and to all appearance for ever, condemned to irksome toil, and to the obscurity of his native village.

It has been observed, in application to a different subject, "that it is the first step only which is painful [1]." How truly may it also be said of indigent merit, while it is the first advance in life which is decisive; but alas! the most important is precisely that which is the most difficult! This once effected—talents and perseverance, directed by virtue, must ultimately succeed, and will either find—or make their future path. But to a generous independence of soul the reflection is wounding,—how frequently this first impulse must be derived from others. How slight are sometimes the operating causes either for or against; yet to acquire the slender means necessary to second the former, or to counteract the lat-

[1] "C'est le premier pas qui coute," &c.

ter, Genius, too often, must be dependent on foreign aid. How nearly were the endowments of Canova consigned to inactivity and oblivion, from the want of that assistance, which the most ignorant noble in the Venetian state could have afforded, without even feeling its amount! At this period, those to whom alone he was known, had removed for a time from Asolo; his old master, who at least would have employed him, was dead; and had the elder Falier adhered to his first resolution, Antonio, at his present age, destitute of friends, with slender knowledge, and great diffidence of natural disposition, would hardly have essayed an effort, and, in all probability, would not have achieved a successful attempt to leave the solitudes of Possagno. The observation of one of his own friends, on a similar though latter occurrence in his life, is perhaps, therefore, but too true, that "the want of a patron at a moment so decisive, would have deprived the world of a happy revolution in the arts [1]."

[1] Cicognara.

Let it not, however, repress the exertions of genius, or lessen that freedom and independence of sentiment, which form characteristics so noble in superior minds, —that the early progress and first exercise of talents are often surrounded by difficulties. These surmounted with honour, like the mists which may obscure the morning sun, serve but to increase succeeding splendour. If the means of removing those obstructions have in greater profusion been conferred on others—in the possession of mental eminence a distinction more elevated has been obtained; and that patronage which thousands may equally extend, can be rendered effective by few indeed.

The transport, then, with which Canova prepared in consequence of an invitation from his benevolent patron, to repair to Venice, may easily be imagined, though it can be really felt—only by him who, like our young artist,

"In life's low vale remote has pined alone,"

agonized by the consciousness of talents,

without an opportunity of exerting them, and by the prospect of distant but not hopeless distinction, which penury alone forbade him to attain. His own affection for the youth had no doubt strongly inclined the senator Falier to adopt a resolution, apparently at variance with his first intentions in this respect. Antonio likewise possessed a zealous advocate in the elder son of that nobleman; with whom, from disparity of age, he had not indeed formed that intimate and familiar friendship which united him to the younger; but in all his studies the former had ever been warmly interested, and by his superior influence with the father, was on the present occasion, of the most essential service [1]. The general testimony of Toretto,

[1] This was Giambatista Falier, to whom is dedicated the print of the beautiful statue of "John the Baptist in infancy," published at Rome in 1817, and engraved by Consorti. But this was not the only mark of grateful respect paid by Canova to this early friend. "Non ho lettera," says the younger Falier, "del Canova ove non ricordi anche per il mio maggior fratello, la sua gratitudine." "I have not a letter of Ca-

also, and the considerations he had more recently urged, subsequently to his return from Pagnano, encouraged these generous friends, by the assurance that the talents of the youthful artist merited, and would repay their patronage.

nova's in which he does not mention his gratitude to my elder brother." A grateful sense of past favours was one of the many amiable traits of Canova's character. An obligation once conferred was never forgotten.

CHAPTER IV.

Arrival of Canova in Venice—Short space in which he enjoyed the advantages of instruction—His different masters ascertained—His diligence and excellent conduct—Distribution of his time, and order of his studies—First public work—Anecdotes of the statue of Eurydice, the first executed by him—Canova opens his first studio, as a master sculptor—State of the art in Venice—His genius characterised by a love of simplicity — Unwearied application—General studies—Exhibition of his Orpheus.—Anecdotes of the various works executed during his stay in Venice—Group of Dedalus and Icarus—Departure for Rome, &c.

In Venice, whither he had thus been invited at fifteen years of age, the reception which Canova experienced from his patron, was most kind and hospitable. The Falier palace he was desired to consider as his home; and every considerable expense of education or of maintenance, was to be supplied by the liberality of its generous owner. But the incipient effects of that disinterestedness and love of independence, which

through life so strongly marked the character and actions of Canova, would not even at that early age, permit, since it might be avoided, this entire dependency on the bounty of others. He now considered himself, though far from adequately versed in the mechanical departments of his profession to pursue with every advantage its higher studies,—yet sufficiently so, to entitle his exertions to some recompense in labouring for another. Hence, with a view at once to improvement in the practice of his art; and to supply, at least in part, from the resources of present attainment, the requisites of future and more advanced acquirement, he resolved to devote a portion of time to working for some eminent master. With this intention, immediately on his arrival, he engaged for a very slender consideration, to work during the latter half of each day, under Giuseppe Ferrari the nephew of his former master, and from that circumstance surnamed also Toretto [1].

[1] Or rather grand-nephew: Speaking of Toretto, Cicognara calls him, " Prozio degli attuali scultori

It has, indeed, been generally supposed, that during his first residence in Venice, Canova's education was in every respect eleemosynary, and his maintenance the gratuity of his patron's generosity. In opposing this opinion, it is not intended to depreciate the extent of those obligations which posterity will owe to the venerable senator, or to deny the importance of those favours which, even in the zenith of his renown, he on whom they had been conferred, was ever ready to acknowledge. In a moral point of view, however, instances of virtuous, though plebeian independence, are not less valuable to society than examples of wealthy or aristocratic munificence; and when truth warrants the exposure, ought to be rendered equally conspicuous. This should especially be the object of endeavour, when, as in the present instance, much has been said on the benefits of such assistance, and

Ferrari."—Storia della Scultura, tom. iii. lib. vii. cap. ii. note.

on the influence of early patronage, and little ascribed to the youthful exertions or merits of the individual. Canova's earnings at this period must doubtless have been inconsiderable, but his wants were likewise few; while this early reliance for support, though only in part, on his own powers, created confidence in their exercise, and cherished that self-esteem, without which nothing noble can be effected. "I laboured," says the artist himself, afterwards writing of this period in a private letter, "I laboured for a mere pittance,—but it was sufficient. It was the fruit of my own resolution; and, as I then flattered myself, the foretaste of more honourable rewards,—for I never thought of wealth." One of his intimate friends, likewise, in a work published during the lifetime of the sculptor, says, "After the death of old Toretto, he remained some space under the nephew of the latter, receiving a very small fee [1]."

[1] "Tenuissima mercede." Cicognara, Storia dell.

It is evident, therefore, that young and inexperienced as Antonio then was, his own exertions did in part minister to his necessities, even on his first coming to Venice; and that Toretto, instead of receiving money for instructing him, paid a certain recompense for his services;—a circumstance which still farther appears, from his having executed at least two pieces by commission, during the period of his connection with the latter.

Under the direction of this his last master, Canova remained not quite a year. As the moiety only of his time was thus occupied, the whole space, during which he continued to receive instructions from others, exclusive of that passed with his grandfather, scarcely exceeded two years. An education in what relates purely to the modes of mechanical operation, thus almost entirely the result of self-instruction, which, without contracting any vicious methods or affected singularities, conducted

Scult. in the note already quoted; where, however, he evidently mistakes the surname of Toretto.

uniformly to superiority in this respect, is rare even in the sister art of painting, but especially so in his own profession. In the latter, those processes which require a master's aid, and which can really be transmitted from one man to another, being both more numerous as well as more tedious, seem to require longer pupilage and more copious tuition. This deficiency of external assistance, in the following verses of an intimate friend, is more poetically, perhaps, than philosophically supplied:

" While glows the yielding mass, beneath each stroke
Effulgent rays still from the marble broke;
These were of genius the eternal fires,
Which mingling with the form, the stone respires,
And to the fair creation seems t'impart
The breathing contour, and the beating heart [1]."

In the different accounts of the early life and studies of Canova, which have hither-

[1] " Fama è che nel trattar la docil pietra
Raggiassero faville ad ogni colpo," &c.

Missirini, " Sui marmi di Antonio Canova, versi," p. 135. *Venetian edit. of* 300 *copies, 4to.*, which is quoted throughout the work. Melchior Missirini is secretary to the Academy " di San Luca;" and his

to appeared in foreign periodical works,—
—in the journals of literary associations,
—and in the narratives of travellers, the grossest mistakes have been committed in the number, the order, and even in the names of his masters. The statement now given is chiefly deduced from original sources, or, in a few instances, adopted from such Italian writers as seemed to possess the best means of information: while the correctness of its various parts may further be proved from historical considerations. Preceding errors appear to have arisen from confounding the several artists who have been distinguished by the surname of Toretto. There have flourished in Venice, at different periods, four individuals, sculptors, distinguished by this appellation.

verses on the works of Canova are justly regarded among the finest specimens of modern Italian poetry. He was also the intimate friend of the artist,—and is designated, "Uno dei piu forti e begli ingegni Italiani." *Catalog. Ragion. Scrittar. delle Arte*, tom. ii. p. 161. His great fault, and one into which an Italian poet is very apt to fall,—is being too mythological.

I. The first whose name this really was, for of the others it was so merely by adoption, was *Giuseppe Toretto*, surnamed *Il Vecchio* or the Old. He appears never to have wrought out of Venice, where his principal works are to be seen in the churches of the Jesuits, the Scalzi, and in several of the colossal statues on the façade of St Eustachio, or, as it is called in the Venetian dialect, St Staë; the Crucifix on the high altar of which is considered his masterpiece [1]. This artist died about 1760, while Canova was yet in the first years of infancy. Those writers are of course in error who state this to have been his first master.

II. *Giuseppe Bernardi* [2], the nephew and scholar of the preceding, was, in consequence of these circumstances, the second who bore the name of *Toretto*. As an artist, he is most to be esteemed for his relievos. Of the well-known series in the

[1] Venezia Illustrata, tom. i.

[2] By some he is erroneously called Domenico.

church of San Giovanni e Paullo, two of the best—the Presentation, and the Marriage of the Virgin, are by him; as also the statues of the Evangelists, of the Doctors, and the eight relievos representing the principal events in the life of San Filippo, in the church of *La Fava.* A great part of his works, however, are to be met with out of Venice, about Udine, Treviso, and Bassano. The performances of this sculptor exhibit a facility of mechanical practice, and a careful neatness of finish, which seem very capable of being improved into that boldness and freedom of execution,—that exquisite delicacy of touch, so conspicuous in the works of his celebrated pupil. But his affected and undignified attitudes, — his figures buried in drapery, — the simpering, unmeaning expression of his heads,—his relievos encumbered with attempts at perspective representations,—in short, works displaying the universal and characteristic defects of the age, shew, in a most striking manner, how much was to be done—and which by Ca-

nova has been so happily accomplished, before sculpture could recover the dignity and simplicity of its purer and happier periods.

III. and IV. Two living artists, brothers, Giuseppe and Giovanni Ferrari, from being related to the above, surnamed likewise *Toretto*, dispute the honour of having been the last of Canova's masters. The younger Falier, whose authority is certainly of much importance, says the latter is the artist under whom his friend was placed on first coming to Venice. This opinion, however, is opposed by collateral circumstances. The chief works of *Giovanni* are the statues of St Peter and St Jeremiah, in the church of the latter; but neither these, nor any other of his performances, are pointed out as those of Canova's master. On the contrary, the Tomb of Admiral Emo, in the church of San Martino, is shewn to every one as the work of that great artist's instructor, and for that reason only. This is known, from historical archives in the Sacristy, to have been executed by *Giuseppe* Ferrari. A more

direct and conclusive proof may be deduced from a statue of Psyche, with a moveable drapery of marble, which is now in the palace of the *Savorgnan* family at Venice, and which was executed by *Giuseppe* Ferrari, partly in imitation of Canova's first production on the same subject. The accurate and eloquent historian of modern sculpture distinctly states, that this statue was the work of one under whom Canova studied, but, respecting the feelings of the artist, forbears a direct mention of his name [1].

In the preceding statement, therefore, notwithstanding the authority of Falier, who appears, in this instance, to have mistaken one name for another, or not to have been aware of the existence of two individuals bearing the same appellation, and practising the same profession,—*Giuseppe* Ferrari Toretto, and not *Giovanni*, is as-

[1] The cause of this delicacy may be discovered in the severity of the remarks. Notes of Letters also in the author's possession, which are derived, in many instances, from the authority of Canova himself, state the fact as in the text.

signed as the second and last master of Canova. The works of this artist are distinguished by an extreme minuteness of finish, but his manner is dry and hard, with all the defects of the time. In the course of life he had either been unfortunate or imprudent, and at the time of Canova's death was, it is said, supported by a pension, which he enjoyed from the almost universal benevolence of the latter.

Resident in Venice, a new and ample field was opened to the observation and improvement of Canova, in which it might reasonably be inferred, that he, who amid the disadvantages of remote provincial seclusion, had been ardent and constant in the pursuit of knowledge, would not intermit his exertions, now that the facilities of attainment were increased. Nor were the high expectations formed of his steadiness and application disappointed. The studies of his profession, now of that liberal and elevated character which cherished every refined desire or aspiring view, occupied every thought and every hour. No longer

depressed by hopeless wishes, or distracted by undecided aim, he beheld a certain and a noble career opened to his ambition, and he was proportionably assiduous in preparing for the course.

Nor ought his moral conduct to be omitted, since it merits at least equal praise with his professional diligence. Whatever might have been the first fears of his friends for a youth of little or rather of no experience, and of lively sensibility; almost without restraint exposed to the seductions of a great city, their apprehensions were quickly dispelled, by the strict propriety of his future behaviour [1].

From his first arrival he continued to observe an exact distribution of his time; to each division of which its proper employment was assigned. The mornings were devoted to the studies of the academy, or to those of the *Farsetti* gallery; and the latter

[1] "Non andò guari che la religiosa moralità del giovanetto il modesto di lui contegno, e la sua intensità nello studio diradarano qualunque titubanza, &c. Falier. Notes of Letters in the Author's possession.

part of every day was passed in the less intellectual, but equally necessary labours of the workshop. A portion of the evening appears to have also been allotted to improving, or rather in many instances, to commencing those branches of general education which the habitudes of life have rendered indispensable; in several of which, as may readily be imagined, he had hitherto made but very gradual advancement.

The Academy of Fine Arts, although far inferior to what it has since become, partly from the beneficence of the very individual of whose studies there we now speak, contained at this time some good casts from the antique, and a still greater number from such modern productions as were then esteemed proper models. In drawing and in modelling from these, as likewise more especially in painting, the students were directed by professors of some eminence. To all of these masters the talents or docility of Canova soon recommended him. *Mingardi*, in particular, the profes-

sor of painting, and an artist of considerable reputation, conceived a great affection for the youth, receiving him under his special care and protection. Public teachers have rarely an opportunity of appreciating any other capabilities in their pupils, save those displayed by their performances in the same arts, which they themselves profess. Where it is known, then, that no previous or peculiar claims to regard existed, we can reasonably suppose this feeling to be excited only by the superiority of its object in such exercises. From the attachment of *Mingardi* to Canova, therefore, it may be permitted to conclude, that in painting, actual progress, or promise of future excellence, rendered the latter, in the opinion of his instructor, more deserving of notice than his compeers. The circumstance is at least of influence to shake the credit of a statement, extensively circulated in our own and also in foreign countries, that in the sister art the attempts of Canova totally miscarried; —an assertion which will appear, when the

subject again falls under consideration, to have been made sufficiently at hazard.

The gallery of the palace, which then belonged to the family Farsetti, as was observed, divided with the academy the attentions of Canova. This institution, the effect of private munificence, was gratuitously open to youth studious of the fine arts, where, without expense, they were supplied with every requisite for study, and where at this time, they could likewise profit by the instructions of an able director [1]. So constant was his attendance, and so great his assiduity here, that the attention of the noble owner was attracted; and from thence the young artist received the earliest commission which he himself has recorded, and which is universally believed to have produced the first performance not intended merely as an exercise, or for which money was paid. On the ba-

[1] When Canova studied there, *Furlani* of Bologna was director of the Farsetti gallery; a man of some taste, who, though he never executed any considerable work in marble, has left several *pensieri* in stucco, both of groups and of single statues, not devoid of merit.

lustrade of the grand stair which then conducted to the gallery, are still to be seen, sculptured in white marble though somewhat injured, two baskets filled with differents fruits and flowers. These are the works in question—the earliest public labours of Canova's hand [1].

In these juvenile productions the objects are represented of the natural size; but it is not always easy to ascertain what fruit or what flower the artist had intended to imitate. By him who impartially examines them, no striking marks of proficiency already acquired, or indications of future superiority, will be discovered. They present no excellence, which a youth of fifteen,

[1] This patron of Canova was the *Commendatore* Farsetti, eminent alike for knowledge of literature and taste in the arts. From the misfortunes of the family, the palace is now changed into the Hotel *della Gran Brettagna*. Of the treasures of its gallery, the works now described alone remain. The casts were transferred to the Academy of Fine Arts, which, under its present learned and enlightened president, the Count Cicognara, has become one of the best establishments of the kind in Italy.

endowed with ordinary capacity, and educated with a steady view to the art, could not have attained or even surpassed. The flowers, which would have constituted the more difficult part, are very sparingly introduced to fill up interstices. If the "*opera eseguita con tutta la gentilezza*" of a panegyrist be at all admissible, the praise must be confined to the mechanical execution, and in that principally to the working of the baskets, which may perhaps exhibit some facility in the use of tools, and much patience of labour.

Let it not be considered "as breaking a fly upon the wheel," thus to amplify criticism on performances so slight. These works designate one of those gradations in the career of genius which it is always useful to ascertain. They prove what has here been maintained, in opposition to former indiscriminating encomiums, that Canova's was not one of those intellects which early unfold extraordinary powers; that, on the contrary, its energies, slowly but securely and with uniform progress, attained

maturity. This first effort, in which, doubtless, his utmost skill was exerted, presents nothing above mediocrity; and from henceforward we shall discover an almost equable march towards the exalted beauty and excellence of his later productions. Invention, judgment and taste seemed to have been connate in his mind in nearly equal degrees; and to have similarly improved, as time and industry increased knowledge or matured experience. These juvenile pieces furnish also another important deduction. They were executed only a short time previous to the period when Canova, becoming his own instructor, left his second and last master. They mark therefore, what portion of his art was derived from the instructions of others, and how much was the result of his own labour and observation. How truly in this respect has it been said of him, by one well qualified to judge, that he was an artist, "*dont personne ne pourra se vanter d'avoir partagé les travaux et le succès*[1]:"

[1] Quatremere de Quincy; Journal des Savans. Julliet 1819.

and with how much propriety may it be affirmed that he was

——— " by Heaven, and not a master taught."

Thus passed in academical or in private study, and in working under Toretto, the first year of Canova's residence in Venice; about which time he left the employment of the former, and commenced his own master. An undertaking hitherto not mentioned, had at leisure hours previously occupied his attention. His patron, anxious to possess some important specimen of his abilities, or willing to incite industry by a specified task, and most probably by a stipulated reward, had prescribed a group on the subject of *Orpheus* and *Eurydice*. They were to be represented at the moment when, through fond impatience, having broken the compact with the gloomy deity, the wretched lover beholds the object of his affection a second time, and for ever torn from his arms. Such were the materials furnished to the artist, who, in all other respects,

was left to the suggestions of his own taste, and the resources of unaided invention.

The model for the statue of Eurydice was now finished; and at this season the Falier family were about to leave town for their usual summer retreat at Asolo. To this retirement Canova also removed, carrying with him every thing necessary to complete, during his residence in the country, that part of his work thus commenced. In consequence of these preparations therefore, at Asolo—in the villa Falier where it still remains, was finished towards the conclusion of his sixteenth year, the first original statue by Canova, or rather his earliest production in which the human form was imitated in any material more durable than modelling clay [1]. The present fi-

[1] The only works of the same nature known to have been executed by Canova previous to this period, are two statues in alabaster, finished in his fourteenth year, while with his first master at Pagnano, and presented to the younger Falier, by whom they are still preserved. They are only about a foot in height, and therefore, except as *primizie* of so great a name, not deserving of notice.

gure is executed in *pietra di Costosa*, a species of soft stone found near Vicenza, of a yellowish but not disagreeable tint, resembling marble discoloured by age. The statue is about the size of nature.

Eurydice is represented amid flames and smoke, in act of leaving the infernal realms. A gigantic hand, intended to appear as if issuing from clouds and darkness which may be imagined to conceal the rest, has arrested her steps, and seizing its victim by the right arm, drags her backwards and downwards. The efforts to overcome this rude and sudden shock, have thrown the body forwards, its whole weight being supported on the left limb, which is placed as if aiding the endeavour to spring from the iron grasp; while the left arm and hand are naturally extended towards her husband. The form is not without dignity; and there is an unaffected simplicity of action, —a feeling of truth, which afford no obscure premices of higher refinement. Grief and despair are sufficiently well expressed in the countenance; but perhaps we ought

not in this performance to expect, and should not, therefore, feel disappointed, by the absence of that nice discernment, which, in representing the effects of passion, teaches how to preserve the symmetry of youth and loveliness.

This statue, notwithstanding it is the first of his labours, is connected with a very important improvement, afterwards introduced by Canova in the method of modelling ;—a circumstance which shews how early he perceived the deficiencies of the art, as then practised, and with what facility his judgment suggested the proper remedy. The model in clay of the figure of Eurydice, according to the general usage of the time, had been formed in proportions much inferior to those of the intended statue. This, however, in working from, was found so apt to lead into error, and so ill adapted for enabling an artist to judge of the final and real effect of his future work, that he then first conceived the idea of executing all models, those even of colossal figures, of exactly the same magni-

tude as the finished sculptures. This method, indeed, he had not an opportunity of adopting, till after his removal to Rome; but from that period it was never afterwards abandoned [1].

An anecdote originating in the occurrences of this date, although the event itself happened long after, ought not to be omitted, as it presents in a very pleasing light the kindness of disposition and amiable condescension, for which the individual of whom it is related was so remarkable. While employed upon his Eurydice, the young artist had been attended by a domestic of the family, whose assistance he had also occasionally required for the purposes of study, and with whom a sort of intimacy had thus been contracted. Nearly forty years afterwards, recognising the same domestic, now aged and infirm, who entered the apartment in attendance on the company, he immediately rose from his

[1] Letter from Canova to Falier, dated August 28. 1784. The subject will again fall under consideration.

seat, and going up to the old man, in presence of all, most cordially embraced him, recalling with delight every little incident of their early acquaintance, and suggesting many endearing recollections. How truly illustrious is the character, which we can thus regard alike with admiration and with love!—How amiable are talents—how noble is greatness, when united with the gentle virtues—the kindly charities of a benevolent heart!—Who does not the more honour his heroism, that Wolfe, on the evening preceding the victory of Quebec, shed tears over the elegy of Gray?—Or who does not deem the splendour of his genius to be exalted, that the *Marquis* of *Ischia* [1] disdained not, even the more humble friendships of *Tonin Canova?*

Conscious, no doubt, of higher powers than he had yet displayed, Canova is said to have been but little satisfied with their first effort. Whatever might have seemed

[1] The title conferred upon Canova, as will afterwards appear, when his name was enrolled in the golden volume of the Capitol, a circumstance which occurred *previously* to the incident mentioned in the text.

his own sentiments, however, they had no influence on the opinion of his patron, by whom Eurydice was considered a work of great merit, and as such, likewise applauded by those to whom the statue was exhibited. In consequence of this general approbation of his friends, the young artist was declared sufficiently instructed in his profession, to present himself, without fear, on the public stage of life.

On this occasion, a vacant cell in the monastery of the Augustine Friars, attached to the church of S. Stefano, through the kindness of the monks, was gratuitously assigned for his use. Here, on the ground floor of the inner cloister,—how seldom is the word united with associations so pleasing!—in an apartment, now shewn with reverential regard, neither spacious nor well lighted, Canova opened his first workshop. Here, for the space of nearly four years, he continued to reside, or rather to work; although by some it has been supposed, that the same place served at once as the scene of labour by day, and of repose by night. This, however, most certain-

ly was not the case. Canova had always an apartment in the house of his patron, whose kindness was to be repaid by such works as he might order or select, till time, assiduity, and merit, should have rendered individual patronage no longer necessary.

One remark may perhaps place this connexion in its true light. Falier had the discernment to discover talent and worth in obscurity, and through the veil of timidity and youth. Yet more, he justly claims the high praise of extending protection to their possessor, while still unknown, and when, consequently, to patronize him, could neither procure nor increase popular esteem, nor add a dependant of celebrity to the trappings of rank.—By merit, Canova raised himself to honour—from penury of condition and meanness of birth. But amid the difficulties which these incur, he enjoyed the signal felicity of still appearing to derive support from his own exertions; and though conscious of receiving the greatest favours, he was taught to consider that the productions of his skill would prove a sufficient equivalent. His gratitude might

thus be fervent, but it could not be oppressive, since it left him in possession of that independence of mind so essential to enterprise—so dear to genius—so precious to feeling.

From this, his second arrival in Venice, to the time of his departure for Rome, Canova resided constantly in the former city. During the first three years of this period, in addition to the mere exercises of study, he was employed on the statue of Orpheus, and in executing a bust of the *Doge Renier.* These, at least, are the only performances which the artist subsequently acknowledged, by insertion in the catalogue of his works furnished by himself for the elegant and elaborate history of sculpture, published by his friend [1]. As former-

[1] An autograph copy of this catalogue the author had an opportunity of transcribing at Rome, and of comparing with that printed in *Cicognara's* work. They agree in every particular.—*Paravia* mentions a statue of Hercules in his cradle strangling the serpents, which he says he remembers well, (ricorda bensi), among the works of Canova at Venice. This statue is mentioned neither by *Federici* nor *Tadini*, nor by Cicognara; and therefore was either not executed, or

ly, he was regular in attendance on the studies of the Academy; and it is likewise said he was very successful in carrying off various of those prizes, which, in such establishments, are provided for the encouragement of merit, or the reward of industry. In proof of this superiority, the writer, indeed, can recollect only one authority; but the circumstance bears of itself intrinsic marks of truth, sufficient to render it admissible.

Canova however early perceived, that it was not from eminence in academical exercises, or from imitation of any living master, he was to expect the attainment of future excellence, or derive his hopes of lasting renown. Like the Greek, he resolved "to begin the art where the art itself had begun [1]," in assiduously studying, and faithfully imitating nature.

not acknowledged by Canova. If it really was by him, it must have been finished at the period of which we now speak, namely, during the first three years of his second residence.

[1] Winkleman, Storia dell' Arte, lib. iv. c. iii., quoting a saying of Lysippus.

Obvious as such a course may now appear, to have then pursued it, is to be esteemed no vulgar praise. What has been so justly said of Dryden's critical writings, may, with equal truth, be applied to Canova's youthful studies. The importance of both is relative: to estimate their value, we must be transported to the respective periods;—we must compare the deficiencies and errors of cotemporaries with the external means afforded for supplying the one, or rectifying the other. The poet's was perhaps the easier task; as it is less difficult to instruct ignorance, than to convince the self-conceit of presumed knowledge.

In every country where the fine arts are now cultivated,—to copy nature, to study the antique, are directions impressed on every student. This happy state of instruction we owe principally to him, who, from native taste, and while yet in early youth, selecting at least the former of these as a guide, had in his progress to combat interest and prejudice,—to oppose the arroga-

ted rectitude of prescription, and the authoritative influence of example.

At this period the simplicity of nature was considered as poverty,—devoid of elegance or grace; the unaffected majesty of the antique was regarded as destitute of force and impression. In the studios of his cotemporaries, our young artist found as models the most proper to be imitated, casts—not of the Apollo, or the Laocoon, of the Venus, or the Gladiator,—but of the works of Bernini, and Algardi, of Le Gros, and even of Rusconi. In the schools, with the living model before the eyes, he beheld nature imitated, or, to use the expression of an Italian writer, "translated," according to certain conventional modes and forms. The practice of the Greeks, as discoverable in their statues; the precepts of the Florentine masters, as contained in their writings, were alike unknown or disregarded. It was no longer thought that "sculpture is a second nature," or that "simple imitation is sufficiently important to constitute a great sculptor;" nor was

it at this time considered necessary, "since sculpture consists in imitating truth, to begin by imitating with truth [1]." Instead of this careful imitation, this faithful delineation of the object of study, each drew or modelled the figure before him, with such additions and corrections of nature, as his own vague ideas of excellence, or capricious notions of beauty suggested.

A method of instruction, in which the nobler principles of former masters were thus neglected, and the routine of conventional mannerism substituted:—a mode of practice, the sole merit of which consisted in dexterity and difficulty of mechanical execution,—were not likely to produce either great works or eminent artists. The art, indeed, was in a fallen condition, not only as regarded the talents of its professors, but also as respected the oppor-

[1] Of these precepts or observations, two are from Gaurici, "Di Scultura," but are the remarks of others, for his own are not much to be relied on; the third is a saying of Ghiberti, preserved by Vasari, "*Vita de Lorenzo Ghiberti.*"

tunities of exerting them, and the encouragement which they received. At Venice, the public works, which had once been deemed requisite for convenience or embellishment, had long been completed; while that diminution of commercial wealth and importance, by which any addition to these was rendered unnecessary, had likewise intercepted the resources of private munificence or ostentation. The few works that could be undertaken by a patronage thus circumscribed, were frittered away among a number of artists, none of whom rose above the humblest mediocrity [1]. This very circumstance, however, while it strongly marks the degradation, must be enumerated as one of the causes which favoured the approaching renovation of the art, to whatever extent this reformation was dependant on the ex-

[1] In Venice the state of sculpture was at this period even more degraded than in the rest of Italy. It was infected with a peculiar corruption, derived from an absurd attempt to imitate old Gothic monuments.

ertions of Canova. Among the number who at this time received the appellation, the latter thus beheld no sculptor in Venice, the authority of whose example, or the influence of whose reputation could shake his confidence in the rectitude of those principles of study which he now proposed to adopt, or seduce him from the method he determined to pursue. The consequence of no patron was so great as to intimidate;—the fame of no artist was so splendid as to dazzle criticism or to sanction error. He could therefore examine without fear, and select without prejudice. He saw that his cotemporaries did not follow nature, —a criterion which he could already estimate; and though he had not yet learned to appreciate the more remote and ideal beauty of ancient art,—it was easy to perceive, even could such a plea be admitted, that they could not allege imitation of the latter as a reason for neglecting the former. He therefore resolved, and could thus unbiassed prosecute his resolutions—to take

every advantage which academical study afforded, but to employ in his own manner the facilities which it presented, and to avoid what he considered its errors. In private study he determined to follow no master, but to take nature—simple nature only, for his model.

To contemplate a system of self-instruction, thus judiciously undertaken, and amid difficulties, conducted to a successful termination, must afford pleasure, while it cannot fail to impress a conviction of the greatest vigour and perspicacity of mind in the individual, who could thus clearly distinguish and happily rectify error. But let it be remembered, that similar causes can alone warrant a similar dereliction of established rules. A departure, in whatever instance, from institutions long respected, is always dangerous, and necessity only can justify the attempt. Let those, therefore, who in any respect would imitate the example of Canova, like him be assured, by an unerring standard, that those principles, whether of science or of conduct,

from which they would secede, are erroneous or defective. Above all, let them be convinced, that like him they possess soundness of judgment, and perseverance of industry, to effect the reformation which they imagine to be necessary. Thus, they "may not be seduced from the right path, by following what, at first view, they may think the light of reason,—and may not be taught to believe, that what is generally good for others, is not good for them [1]."

Canova, at no season of life, was one of those who rest satisfied with having merely formed good resolutions. The plan of study, adopted after mature deliberation, was with steady assiduity pursued. The whole tendency of his endeavours was to ground his art on principles totally unconnected with living practice. He could then look for no assistance from cotemporaries, with whom he cultivated little or no intercourse, and by whom, in return, he was regarded as a visionary youth, of some talent,

[1] Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourse XV.

but without fire or imagination;—for by such names they dignified their own aberrations from truth and nature. He could thus prosecute, in the seclusion which he loved, those methods of discipline which judgment instructed, or taste disposed him to prefer.

In his studio was constantly to be found something from nature, which might conduce to a knowledge of form or of expression. It was his frequent exercise to draw, or more generally to model, for several successive days, from the living subject. In thus diligently imitating, he never allowed his imagination, in the slightest manner, to deviate from nature, as presented to his view, on these occasions. To such faithful accuracy had he accustomed himself in this respect, that his earlier works were asserted to have been wrought from casts taken from the living model.

Without entering at present into the inquiry, how far mere imitation of nature is the legitimate object of art,—it will hardly be controverted, that correctness in this

instance must form, at least, the best preparation for arriving at higher excellence. At the same time it must be acknowledged, that Canova, as his works sufficiently evince, long possessed no more enlarged ideas of beauty than such as nature actually exhibits to the observer. The quality which principally characterised his early genius, was an extreme love of simplicity. Such a disposition of mind was quickly disgusted by the affected productions of living art, and by the models on which they were immediately formed. A taste capable of justly appreciating the recondite beauties of the antique, is itself the result of study and experience. This ardent love of simplicity, therefore, while it urged him to resort to that source, could be gratified by referring to nature alone. A long interval, however, elapsed before he displayed an acquaintance with those sublime principles of art, which in imitating nature produce creations, whose proximate archetypes have no real existence, yet

whose exalted excellence is deduced from nature herself.

To Anatomy, our young sculptor dedicated at this time a large portion of attention, this science being regarded by him, what it ought by every artist to be considered, "the secret of the art." The perfection attained in his future labours, confirms the remark which has been made on the precept,—"the greatest of moderns are those who have shewn themselves best acquainted with it [1]." Circumstances at first constrained him to remain satisfied with such knowledge of the subject, as books and public lectures, or the dissection of inferior animals could supply. Afterwards, which was continued even to a late period of life, it was his constant practice to study from the human subject, to dissect with his own hand, and to make studies, at least by sketching, and frequently by modelling from every important part, or well-defined

[1] Both the precept and remark are from Lomazzo.

conformation in particular instances [1]. A very intimate friend, who was admitted at all hours, finding him one morning thus employed, could not forbear observing how strange it seemed, that operations often so revolting should principally conduce to the beauty of performances, which were distinguished by the utmost grace and loveliness. "Hast thou never remarked," replied the artist, "that the noblest edifices must be commenced by removing dirt and rubbish—yet on the proper degree of care with which this disgusting operation is performed, depend the solidity, the symmetry, and even existence of the future fabric?"

Nor was it during the hours of solitary application only, that the study of nature occupied an observation ever awake to whatever might contribute to progress in art. It was Canova's custom at this time, accompanied generally by his youthful friend Falier, to indulge with moderation in the public a-

[1] Cicognara mentions his assiduous study of anatomy;—the anecdote is from a private source.

musements of the spectacles and theatres. In these scenes of enjoyment, however, the young artist never mingled as an idle spectator. His profession constantly engaged his thoughts; and these places of resort formed, to his penetrating eye, "living schools" of nature, where she might be observed with every restraint removed, and where every passion is displayed without disguise. Whatever of interesting in expression, or striking in attitude, occurred on these occasions, was pointed out to his companion, and retained as an unerring precept in guiding his future practice. These casual accessions to the results of regular study, were considered as most valuable acquisitions in the knowledge of what he emphatically termed "*Il scolpir del cuore*,"—"the sculpture of the heart[1]."

Even in walking the streets, where that

[1] "Le feste, gli spettacoli clamorosi i teatri, di chi approfittò semper con gran sobrietà, non erano per esso che la viva scuola, d'onde trarre i precetti piu interessanti." Falier.—Letters of Canova and of his Friends.

exercise can be enjoyed in Venice, these habits of observation were not intermitted. He would often stop before the workshop of some artisan, to remark the forceful yet easy positions into which the body was thrown in different occupations. On perceiving that he was observed by those who had been the objects of contemplation, he immediately retired, saying, "They will now endeavour to do their best, and consequently spoil all." So great was his love of simplicity. While traversing the long succession of spacious wharfs which line the beautiful and extensive basin, where the "rich argosies" once anchored, and which formed his favourite range, his progress was often arrested, in admiration of the well-formed trunk, or sinewy limbs of a porter in powerful exertion [1]. Where both

[1] Many of these habits of study resemble those ascribed to our Gainsborough, as described by Reynolds, Discourse XIV., with this difference, that the painter seems to have remarked only peculiarities, the sculptor those beauties which might elevate his conceptions of general nature. Some of the particulars

the climate and the manners of the lower classes permit of less solicitude in the article of clothing than in more rigorous temperatures, such adventitious studies may be attended with considerable advantages. They may enable the artist to seize those fugitive effects of muscular action, which are so rarely to be perceived in the artificial movements and studied positions of academical figures. Canova had likewise acquired that happy disposition of mind, by which every thing useful is instantly appreciated, and in its proper order referred to the leading pursuit. Appearances thus hastily caught, were retained with such precision, that when the course of future study required, he could recall with certainty the acquisitions which chance had thrown in his way. On occasions where he deemed it of sufficient importance, he would pro-

in the text are thus mentioned in florid language, but on the best authority: "Quante volte seco passeggiande m'intrattenne a osservare, il bell' ignudo del facchino in violenza, la bella mossa del fabbro sull' ancudine scintillante!" Falier.

duce finished drawings, from having taken on the spot the slightest hints of subjects thus accidentally presented. He seemed to possess, in an eminent degree, both the requisites which have been deemed necessary to form the sculptor,—a quick and energetic apprehension of material beauty,—and a ready fidelity of hand in describing its contours [1].

At this period his application was unremitting. It was his constant practice never to allow a single day to pass, in which some visible advances in his profession had not been accomplished. Ra-

[1] David (Emeric) Recherches sur l'Art Statuaire, Part iii. Sec. ii. § ii. p. 496. One might almost imagine, could this author have possibly been acquainted with the circumstances, that in describing the education proper to form a sculptor, he had the early life of Canova in his mind. The essay was crowned by the Institute in 1804-5, and is a work of eloquence and merit, but disingenuously favourable to French art and French artists;—a circumstance which is thus gently hinted at in the *Catalogo Ragionato* on works of art: "L'autore non si lascia *trasportare* in favore delle arte Italiane.

phael's happy adaptation of Cicero's maxim, "*Nulla dies sine lineâ*," was in Canova literally exemplified. For many years he continued to observe as an established rule not to be deviated from, a resolution which he had previously formed, never to indulge in repose, till he had first in that day produced some design [1]. Such is the unwearied industry from which eminence may be expected;—such are the laborious efforts by which excellence is attained.

"The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar,"

is not to be gained at a bound. Genius soars not on easy pinion; and many who may gaze with malignant envy on its flight, would have shrunk from the patient toil,—the devoted self-denial, by which the glorious height has finally been reached.

"Nil sine multo
Vita, labore dedit mortalibus."

It could not, however, escape a mind

[1] Era sua pratica impreteribile di non coricarsi giammai se non avesse prima coronato quel giorno col suo disegno. Falier.—Lettere di Canova.

such as young Canova possessed, that to become an accomplished artist, more was required than merely skill in his own profession [1]. While thus closely engaged, therefore, in studies immediately and indispensably connected with his art, he was not regardless of that collateral knowledge which unites elegance with science, and to constitutional excellence adds correctness of subordinate embellishment. Although as puerile, properly banished, at least from *English* poetry [2], the splendid fictions of classic mythology are still appropriated by painting and sculpture. The latter, in particular, delights to embody its graceful

[1] "Ils sont rares les hommes privilegiés, qui sans avoir reçu d'instruction, et s'addonant à une étude unique s'élévent d'un vol assuré." It might have been added, that the studies connected with taste or sentiment in which such men could succeed are no less rare.—David, Part iii. Sect. ii. § 3.

[2] Among the numerous obligations which literature owes to the critical abilities of Dr Johnson, is to be enumerated the severity with which he chastised "mythological folly," wherever he found it in modern poetry.

or majestic forms; and even when the subject is from living nature, the accessories are commonly drawn from antiquity. To archaiological pursuits, then, as being peculiarly useful to the sculptor, he devoted a considerable share of attention [1]. With history, both ancient and modern, especially the former, he rendered himself sufficiently well acquainted, "so as," in his own words, "to store the mind with real imagery, and to exalt conceptions of character."

In these various departments, it is not indeed to be supposed that Canova's acquirements could at this time be profound. The endeavour at least evinces the ardour with which he employed every means that might render him more eminent in his art. At the same time we must admire his judgment in pursuing those which are best adapted to the attainment of that object. After his removal to Rome, the studies

[1] In this department Canova's attainments were subsequently very great: at the time of his death he was president of the *Accademia di Archeologia* at Rome. On his election to that dignity, he pronounced a discourse replete with taste and erudition.

now only commenced, there received completion. With few of the classic writers of Greece or Italy, through the medium of translations, was he finally unacquainted; and in the best writers on antiquity, on taste, and on the philosophy of the arts, he was well versed. These pursuits were always kept in judicious subordination to the ruling passion of his life—professional superiority. Unlike Mengs, or our own ingenious but unfortunate Barry, he never allowed the man of letters to interfere with the artist; and superior in this respect even to the "learned Poussin," his correctness never degenerated into pedantry. To use the words of a friend, "He knew how to instruct himself in every kind of information connected with literature and the arts, at the very moment when his heart and hand were occupied with such exquisite address, in giving to marble life and movement [1]."

At this period also, Canova was not in-

[1] "Seppe erudirsi di ogni dottrina di lettre e d'arte—nell' atto stesso che il cuore e la mano si occupavano con tanta maestria in dar vita e palpito ai marmi. Falier.

attentive to those studies, which on a slight view seem to belong rather to the elegant scholar than to the able artist, but which a residence on the Continent renders eminently necessary, even to the latter. Of foreign languages he is said to have understood, and to have spoken, the Spanish and French. Of the former his knowledge may be questioned; but of his perfect acquaintance with the latter, no reasonable doubt can be entertained. Previous to the public exhibition of his Orpheus, and consequently during the early part of his abode in Venice, he had obtained the friendship of some young Spaniards, who were on their travels, and frequently visited the artist in his studio at San Stefano. Conversing with these strangers, he is said to have acquired their language in a few days [1]. The knowledge of a foreign tongue is not a matter of this easy attainment;—the time is perhaps sufficient for acquiring the principles of a correct pronunciation, which future study

[1] Falier uses the more dubious expression, *brevissimi giorni*, which may also be explained by the words in the text; and it at all events implies a *very brief* space of time.

might have matured into practical correctness and facility. But as it does not appear that he afterwards gave attention to the subject, to deny his perfect knowledge of Spanish, will derogate little from the merits of our artist. The French language he studied with assiduity; and before his departure from Venice, spoke it with elegance and fluency.

Such was the general plan of professional study, and such were the accomplishments, more or less intimately connected with it, which, during nearly seven years [1], occupied the attention, and marked the industry of Canova. Of this time three years had now elapsed, undistinguished by any production of art, since he had finished at Asolo the statue of Eurydice. As might be expected, therefore, increased knowledge and experience are very evident in the completing of the group; and the figure of Orpheus is not only superior to its companion, but may be compared with any performance of the artist's noviciate.

[1] From the autumn of 1773 to Dec. 1780.

Of the Orpheus the forms are light and elegant;—the attitude is graceful yet energetic, representing him in act to rush forward, and snatch his partner once more from fate. But a sudden recollection seems to have arrested the unfinished movement. The left hand, with violent action, has dashed to earth that lyre now destined to become

——— "the sole companion of his way."

The right arm, raised in more subdued emotion, indicates, by its repressed action, the consciousness of despair,— that human power is unavailing, and that all is lost. Rage and grief contend for mastery in the expression of the countenance, and are perhaps too strongly indicated, consistent with beauty or moral dignity. The whole figure, however, exhibits wonderful correctness, the utmost simplicity, and the closest imitation of nature. Though wrought in soft stone, the execution has been conducted with such skill, that on the first view it may easily be mistaken for a marble statue tinted by age.

It had long been a custom at Venice, on the annual festival of the Ascension, for artists to expose to public examination in the square of St Mark's, those performances which they had recently finished, or deemed proper for such an exhibition. Encouraged by the applause, and induced by the persuasions of his friends, Canova so far overcame his natural diffidence, as to present here this statue of Orpheus. The occasion was doubtless a trying one;—he had long panted for fame;—this was the first effort to bring himself into public notice, and his feelings were proportionably agitated. He who has done most to deserve praise, will suffer the most from apprehension lest it should not be obtained. In the present instance, these fears were vain. When the prejudices of perverted taste, or of false criticism cease to operate, the representation of pure nature must ever please. Though so different from the style of art which then prevailed, the simplicity and truth, therefore, so conspicuous in this new production, called forth the approbation of every man of genuine feeling; while

the obscurity of its author excited neither the strictures of pretended judges, nor the malevolence of envious rivals. The work was thus universally applauded; and from the exhibition of his Orpheus in 1776 is to be dated, the commencement of the success and reputation of Canova.

By a singular coincidence, such as we sometimes observe in life, a very popular opera bearing the same name, made its appearance at this time, in which the character of Orpheus was supported by a highly celebrated performer. It would now be difficult to decide the respective claims of the rival arts to public favour on this occasion. The suffrages, indeed, seem to have been pretty equally divided between the sculptor and the musician, as appears from the following lively passage in a letter written at this time by a Venetian lady to a friend in Rome:—"You complained, during your short stay among us, that a long residence in Venice would be impossible, since one must be soon teased either to death or flight by a multitude of questions. You ought to

have exerted a small share of patience, in pity to us poor females, who, surrounded by the waves, cannot gad abroad like you fortunate inhabitants of *terra firma*, and consequently know nothing out of our own little world. However, were you here at present, your Roman indolence would be in no danger of disturbance from numerous inquiries;—two questions would now make up the sum-total of our interrogatories;—Have you heard *Guadagni* [1] *?*—Do you know *Canova ?*"—The latter inquiry, it is to be feared, could seldom be answered in the affirmative. Few were acquainted with the youth, who in the solitary cloister of San Stefano had silently and unnoticed pursued those studies—of which the present statue was the first fruits.

The group which has now been examined is of itself sufficiently interesting, as the first important work of the artist; and as

[1] This was the name of the performer who played the part of Orpheus. The opera was the composition of Bertoni.

respects the second figure, more especially, the earliest day-spring of a purer taste, breaking on the long-obscured horizon of modern art. But the moral associations connected with this youthful production, as illustrative of its author's character, are perhaps still more pleasing.

The applause bestowed on the Orpheus by his fellow-citizens, was ever remembered by Canova with the most lively gratitude, "as that which made him a sculptor [1];" and seemed to be contemplated with even greater satisfaction than the more extended renown of his later years. This, it may be said, was only natural. The value of that which may be given or withheld, is commensurate with the necessities of the individual by whom it is solicited. Praise therefore is doubly grateful to him, whose claims to superiority are yet to be established, and who is still uncertain whether his efforts merit commendation. Judging, however, from Canova's disposition, as also

[1] His own words.

from his frequent expressions on the subject, the pleasure in this instance seemed to be derived chiefly from his reputation having been first acknowledged among his own immediate countrymen, and from his early fame being witnessed by those who were most dear to him. After an interval of many years, on reading the letter just quoted, he appeared most sensibly affected, exclaiming, as he finished the passage, "*O cari amici! O grati tempi! quindi sono divenuto scultore*[1]." In progressing towards the "summits of life," the view is indeed constantly extending; and, to vulgar ambition, intensity may be supplied by diffusion; but by the benevolence of real genius is never forgotten that little circle which once bounded its hopes and wishes, and where it first found admirers and friends.

Gratitude was a prominent virtue in Canova's character,—of which a striking instance connected with these statues, can-

[1] "O dear friends! O delightful times! by these have I been rendered a sculptor."

not be introduced with greater propriety than on the present occasion. Almost half a century after the first commencement of the group, and when maturity of fame such as few have attained, in minds of less feeling, would have obliterated such recollections; on being created Marquis of Ischia, he assumed as armorial ensigns the *serpent* and *lyre*, the mythological symbols of Orpheus and Eurydice. This was intended as a mark of grateful attachment to his first patron, and exhibits in an amiable light his reminiscences of early life. But his sentiments are best explained in his own words; and the manner in which the information is conveyed to us, is not less pleasing than the incident itself. In a letter, dated 23d July 1817, and addressed to his friend *Sig. Giuseppe Falier*, after endeavouring to excuse a long silence, he proceeds thus:—"But if I am negligent in writing, my heart is not so in its remembrance of you, and of your most excellent family. Do you desire a proof of this? Behold one. Know that in my armorial

bearings I have adopted the emblems of Orpheus and Eurydice, in memory of these my two first statues, ordered of me by your most estimable father; from which two statues I ought to acknowledge the beginning of my own civil existence [1]."

In minds, although otherwise highly endowed, whose principal motive to action is vanity, or whose powers are not sufficiently capacious to embrace, in its full extent, the object of pursuit, early praise generally operates in a pernicious manner, by relaxing industry, and inducing a self complaisancy with respect to present attainments, than which nothing can be more hostile to

[1] "Ma se sono trascurato nello scrivere, non lo è però il cuore mio nel ricordarsi di lei, e dell' eccellentissima sua famiglia. Ne vuole ella una prova? Eccola. Sappia che nello stemma mio ho adoptato gli emblemi di Orfeo et di Euridice, in memoria delle due prime mie statue, ordinatemi dall' adorabile padre suo, dalle quali statue devo riconoscere il principio della mia esistenza civile." Roma, 23d Juglio 1817. The original is in the possession of Sig. Emmanuele Cicogna, from whom a collection of Canova's Letters may be expected. This gentleman resides in Venice, and was an intimate friend of the artist.

future progress. In the biography of artists, such instances are not uncommon: But on the modest Canova, the universal encomiums thus bestowed on the first of his works submitted to public inspection, acted only as incentives to greater exertion; an encouragement to persevere, with augmented confidence, in the mode of study which he proposed to follow, and in which his earliest efforts had thus been crowned with success. Being now regarded as a young artist of considerable merit, his professional employment became in proportion increased. Soon after the appearance of his Orpheus, he received from the Senator *Grimani* an order for a copy of the same, but in dimensions smaller than those of the original. This was finished about a year after the former, and is of Carrara marble, being the first statue executed by Canova in that material. By some writers this second statue of Orpheus has been supposed to have laid the foundation of Canova's fame, as forming the subject of the exhibition already described. Many reasons,

however, might be adduced for refusing credit to this statement: suffice it to state, that the best authorities agree in ascribing that honour to the first Orpheus, now in the villa Falier [1].

Canova's prospects thus improving, it became necessary to provide more suitable accommodation than his present workshop afforded. Taking leave, therefore, of the kind monks of San Stefano, he removed to a more commodious and better lighted studio, in the street or lane which bears the

[1] Tadini says, it was the *second* Orpheus which was exhibited. Vide "Le Sculture e le Pitture di Ant. Canova, publicate fino a quest anno 1795, dal. Co. Faustino Tadini." Venezia, 1796, 8vo. Paravia merely follows this writer. Federici "mem Trivigiane," &c. mentions only one. Cicognara, Falier, and Canova's Letters corroborate the narrative in the text. English travellers are little to be depended on in any thing concerning Canova. Of these several state, that it was the group of Dædalus and Icarus, which gave name to Canova,—almost his very last production in Venice. The servant at the Pisani palace, who shews this group, retails the same story. Hence its origin.

name of "San Maurizio [1]." Here he continued till his final departure from his native country. The respect with which Milton's various abodes in London have been remembered [2], is not without parallel in the regard expressed for the houses which Canova has at different times inhabited at Venice: these, though certainly not so numerous as the mansions of our poet, are viewed with no less veneration.

The succeeding year gave birth to a production, the most considerable yet undertaken by the artist, in a statue of Esculapius, in proportions larger than life. This work is also executed in marble, and was originally commissioned by the *Marchioness Spinola* at Genoa, who then resided with great splendour at Venice. From a change of circumstances, however, the lady was obliged to relinquish the contract, when the statue had now been finished. It will readily be believed, that such an occurrence

[1] "Al traghitto *di* S. Marizio."—Paravia.
"Al traghetto *in* S. Maurizio."—Falier.

[2] See Johnson's Life of Milton.

was, at this period, a matter of very serious inconvenience to Canova, more especially as the performance remained long upon his hands, without finding a purchaser. At length it became the property of a Sig. *Cromer*, an advocate. At the villa of this gentleman's son the statue is still to be seen [1].

The subject, from its nature, admits of little variety, and is still farther circumscribed by the established modes of antiquity; but the statue exhibits beauties altogether unknown in the corrupted style of cotemporary art. The sober and dignified air, so suitable to the character;—the chaste simplicity of the drapery, in which nothing forced—nothing affected, appears,—and which clothes without concealing the figure,—possess intrinsic merit; while they have the recommendation of novelty when compared with the productions of the same or preceding age.

This statue, after being removed from the workshop, the artist is reported to

[1] Between Venice and Padua.

have seen for the first time, not long previous to the melancholy event which deprived the world of his talents. The perfection, both in taste and in mechanical skill, which it displays, is said to have greatly surprised him, and even seemed to occasion a degree of sorrow; for he complained, that "during the succeeding half century, his progress had by no means corresponded with the indications of excellence exhibited in this performance of his youth [1]."

Contemporaneous with the preceding work, is a group on the subject of Apollo and Daphne, in which the figures are of the natural size, and in *pietra Vicentina*, the soft stone already mentioned. From some cause not explained, the piece was never completed, the artist having proceeded little farther than merely to determine the forms.

[1] Bernini, in like manner, on seeing some of his early works, exclaimed, "Oh quanto poco profitto ho io fatto nell' arte, mentre giovine, maneggiava il marmo in questo modo." Reynolds, too, in viewing the portraits which he had painted in his youth, is well known to have expressed nearly similar feelings.

The order of time has now conducted the reader to the close of Canova's twenty-second year, which introduces the most important, as well as most celebrated undertaking of his noviciate—the group of Dædalus and Icarus, in marble of *Carrara*. The Senator, and Procurator *Pisani* [1], for whom this was executed, a nobleman distinguished by a love for the arts, lived in habits of intimacy with the patron of our artist who thus obtained the commission. The piece was originally intended for a niche in the centre pillar between the double entrance-doors of the palace, or rather united palaces of *Pisani* and *Barbarigo*, which front the grand canal. This locality on the water is said to have suggested the subject. But such was the excellence of the finished production, that its possessor, esteeming it too valuable for an external exposure, placed it with some *chefs d'œuvres* of the sister art, in an inner gal-

[1] Procurator of St Mark's, an office of considerable dignity in the Venetian State.

lery; while its destined site remains still unoccupied [1].

In this group the figures are of the natural size, and naked, with the exception of a mantle, one corner of which is brought round the loins of Dædalus, while the rest falling behind in large masses, serves as a mutual support. They are preparing for their adventurous journey. The father is represented in act of adapting to the shoulders of his son the fatal pinions, which he vainly hoped would waft him safely from Cretan bondage. Icarus as if assisting, holds in his right hand part of the materials; but seems chiefly engaged in watching the progress of the work, which he regards with all the careless unconcern of fearless youth. These different but connected actions, have thrown both into attitudes extremely natural and simple, yet admitting the fullest effects of contrast. Dædalus rests on the right lower extremity; and extending behind his son the right

[1] Here is the celebrated "Family of Darius," by Paul Veronese, with other excellent works.

arm, in order to adjust the wing, which, with the left hand brought forward, he is affixing with cord, presents in front his broad and muscular frame. The body is bent gently forwards, but the head being turned towards his son, the aged countenance, deeply marked with anxious expression, is seen in profile. Icarus, on the contrary, inclined towards his father, a side view only of his slender and buoyant form is exposed. The head, indeed, being bent with a graceful inclination, and the looks directed to the right shoulder, the motion has turned the chest more in front, while it fully exhibits the sweet and placid countenance.

In the present group, the excellences and the defects of Canova's early manner are displayed in striking lights. The former consist in simplicity of style, and in the most faithful imitation of nature,—beauties essential to perfection, and for the absence of which nothing can compensate, —while the latter are to be considered not so much absolute blemishes, as indications

of only relative proficiency in a mode of study, of which such deficiencies are, at a certain stage, the necessary consequences. This method, however, presented the sole means of rescuing the art from its then wretched condition, and of raising it to that state of purity and elegance by which it is now distinguished.

The characteristic failing is a want of elevation;—and the desire of preserving extreme simplicity in the grouping, in the forms, and in the attitudes, has produced an effect approaching to poverty and constraint. These faults are more conspicuous in the figure and position of Dædalus, whose lower extremities, from the manner in which they are disposed, do not appear sufficiently developed. Hence, perhaps, the eye is not instantaneously assured that uniformity of action is preserved. The form and position of the left arm and shoulder also are particularly constrained and inelegant. The attitude of Icarus is easy; and though inferior in firmness and decision of outline,

to that of his father, his figure is more pleasing, and excites greater interest in the spectator. When the two figures, however, are considered in relation to the general effect of the group, their disposition is agreeable and judicious. The skilful manner in which the saliant and retiring curves of the adjacent contours are made to correspond, is particularly to be admired. This is accomplished without the least appearance of art, by a slight elevation of the ground on which the more youthful figure is placed; an arrangement seemingly required by the operations in which they are engaged, and possessing the additional advantage of agreeably dividing the disparity of stature in the father and son.

So striking is the truth of representation, and so nearly does it approach to real nature, that when this group was afterwards exhibited in the residence of the Venetian ambassador at Rome, many who were themselves artists, suspected the original statues to have been copied from models executed by actual application of the soft

material to the living form. "It appeared impossible," says a writer speaking of this very work, "that the chisel could have so happily surprised those fugitive effects and movements, which for a long time had ceased to appear in the performances of modern sculpture, composed from memory, without any regard to the careful imitation of the natural [1]."

This fidelity, however, is not accompanied with selection,—nor ennobled by imagination. The forms, though exquisite examples of mechanical science, are such as

[1] Poiche non sembrava ad alcuno possible che lo scarpello con tanta felicità sorprendere potesse quei fugitivi effetti e andamenti della carna, che da longo tempo non apparivano piu nelle opere della scultura moderna, fatte a memoria, senza prender di mira la diligente imitazione della natura.—Cicognara, Storia del. Scult. tom. iii. ed. folio. This most excellent writer, in reviewing the whole series of Canova's works, ventures to find fault in only two instances, and one of the errors the artist had himself acknowledged and subsequently rectified. It is to be regretted, that he has thus brought with some his impartiality into question; but let it be remembered, that he dwells only on the most perfect works of the artist.

common nature readily affords. In the figure of Dædalus there is even a degree of vulgarity. The head in particular is exactly such as the living model may be supposed to have presented; and its animated prototype might easily have been found in the streets, or on the canals of Venice. If the form of Icarus appear superior, it is chiefly because youth is naturally more beautiful than age. There is here, likewise, the same faithful imitation, but no attempt to elevate nature, or to refine character.

In this performance, the approaches to the grand style of sculpture are consequently remote. Its beauties are indeed important, because they are fundamental; but so far from constituting excellences of the highest order, that in addressing the sensibility without elevating the imagination, they have omitted the nobler object of art. The same work, however, seldom affords so many subjects of interesting contemplation. In this we are presented with a practical illustration of the studies pursued by

its author;—we observe the extent to which he carried these plans;—and we trace the intermediate gradation from simple imitation, to the higher and more imaginative style of his later productions. According to the method which Canova has been described to have followed in the prosecution of his art, we discover in the present composition, a strong and close imitation of living nature, with a sedulous rejection of all conventional or theoretic modes of rendering the subject. Not that he proceeded without principles, or was one of those,

——— "who indiscreetly stray,
"Where purblind practice only leads the way[1]."

Just theory is indispensable to excellence in practice; but to be just, it must follow, not precede an acquaintance with nature.

[1] Part of Mason's imitation of the following lines of Du Fresnoy:

Utque manus grandi nil nomine practica dignum
Assequitur, primum arcana quam deficit artis
Lumen, et in præceps abitura ut cæca vagatur.
De Arte Graphica, § 56.

Such was the opinion of Canova. He was not ignorant of the manner in which former masters had viewed nature; but he maintained, "that the first business of an artist is to imitate, not to create"—that he ought to commence with preparing by a rigid adherence to reality, hereafter to establish a theory,—not to set out with ideal notions, to which future practice, and even observation, in some measure, were to become conformable. In this respect, the order of his acquirements presents a singular deviation from the course commonly observed in the advances of individual talent, and resembles rather the progress of general improvement. In the productions of his youth, we remark little of the fire, and none of the extravagances which have been supposed to indicate a vigorous and fervid imagination. But in a line of study where he had no present example to guide, no instruction to direct, to which every practice of living art was opposed; though he seems not immediately to have perceived the real extent, and ultimate purpose of imitation,

his exercises were ever conducted with judgment, and he had subsequently nothing to unlearn. His progress was thus continuous, rising by regular gradations, from simple correctness, bordering on timidity, to elevation and refinement. In the present composition this last change is not yet accomplished. Its state marks that critical period in the intellectual career, when talents of a secondary order are matured;—when, according as actual acquirement remains stationary, or is surpassed, future rank must be stamped with mediocrity, or raised into eminence. Here the artist touches the confines where the natural graduates into the ideal. Simple imitation can scarcely be carried further; for the general proportions only indicate something superior to individual nature. This is the boundary of inferior powers. Genius alone can advance beyond—can soar from the means, to the object of art;—from the representation of particular models, to the delineation of perfect and universal symmetry;—can

> Trace beauty's beam to its eternal spring,
> And pure to man the fire celestial bring.

The group of Dædalus and Icarus may be considered as the last work executed by Canova in Venice, at least the account of his labours in that city is thus, with the greatest propriety, brought to a close. A statue of the Marquis Poleni, indeed, on which he was employed at the same time, was finished some months later than the termination of the former. An examination of this latter, however, as the nature of its subject, and the material of which it is composed, hardly allowed scope for the display of superior skill, would add nothing to the previous knowledge of the artist's abilities [1]. If, then, the preceding observations have appeared long, let it be remembered, that the subject of them is not only the most important of his youthful performances, but is the only work calculated to give correct views of his powers and attainments, when early education was

[1] This statue is rather larger than life, in pietra Vicentina, and is to be seen in the Prato della Valle, a public place in Padua, formerly a marsh, now ornamented with statues.

completed, and at the eventful period of becoming a resident in that city, which has so long, and so justly been regarded as the capital of art.

The merits and reputation of Canova were now generally recognised at Venice: But in his profession, this city neither presented a field for the exercise of abilities, nor afforded the means of more extensive and refined acquirements. He therefore resolved to attempt an establishment at Rome. As affairs stood, however, this would have been a rash and hazardous enterprise, without having first secured a prospect of something certain on which to depend. Under these circumstances, his friends resolved to petition the Venetian Senate for a pension, that he might thus be enabled to prosecute his studies without embarrassment, "and adorn by his merits the city of Venice [1]."

In this matter, though his patrons did not despair of final success, considering the munificence of the body addressed, the

[1] "E decorare col proprio merito la citta di Venezia,"—the words of the original address.

smallness of the sum demanded, and the deserts of the individual for whom it was solicited, considerable difficulty and delay were to be expected. It had not been the practice of the Senate to interfere in such cases; and the prevalence of future applications, from once giving a precedent, was to be apprehended. The motion was thus likely to experience opposition. Canova therefore determined to leave the affair in the hands of his supporters, and in the mean time, repairing to Rome, to trust to his talents and to fortune.

His constant and best benefactor did not desert him on this occasion. It fortunately happened that the *Cavaliere Zuliani*, who then represented the republic at the Papal Court, was the intimate friend of the senator Falier. To this nobleman, therefore, our artist was recommended in the warmest terms [1].

[1] The Cavaliere Gerolamo Zuliani was elected Ambassador to the Holy See in November 1777, not in 1780, when, as has been erroneously reported, Canova accompanied him to Rome.

Soon after his twenty-third birth day, then, our artist for the first time beheld the shores of the Adriatic disappear, as he directed his course to the more classic banks of the Tiber.

Here a new æra commences, not only in the history of the life, but in the style of art which Canova subsequently adopted; or rather, as will appear, a refinement in that line of study, which, from the commencement of his independent career, he had constantly pursued.

The works executed, up to the present period, with the order of time in which they were finished, according to a list in his own handwriting, are as follow:

1772. Two baskets with fruits and flowers, in marble, for the Farsetti Palace; and still there.

1773. Statue of Eurydice, in soft stone of Costosa.

1776. Statue of Orpheus in the same material. These two form one group, and are in the villa Falier at Asolo. Both natural size.

1777. Bust of the Doge Renier, now in the possession of Sig. Angelo Querini, of Venice.

1777. Copy of the Orpheus, in Carrara marble. Venice, Palazzo Grimani.

1778. Statue of Esculapius, in marble, larger than nature. Villa Monseliana, Venetian State.

Apollo and Daphne, in soft stone, natural size, unfinished. Venice.

1779. Group of Dædalus and Icarus, in marble of Carrara. Pisani Palace, Venice.

1780. Statue of the Marquis Poleni, in soft stone of Vicenza, larger than life. Padua.

CHAPTER V.

State of the arts during the latter half of the eighteenth century—Causes chiefly contributing to the revival of a purer style of sculpture—Condition of the art on the arrival of Canova in Rome—Enumeration of his cotemporaries in that city—Foreign artists—Flaxman—Reception of Canova by the Venetian Ambassador—Anecdotes of the exhibition of the Dædalus and Icarus—Canova undertakes a group on the subject of Theseus and the Minotaur—Generosity of the Venetian Senate—First exhibition of the Theseus—Anecdotes—Description of the group—Remarks—New prospects of professional success—Journey to Venice—Return to Rome, and final establishment in that city.

In the introductory chapters, the history of sculpture was brought down to the middle of the eighteenth century. It will now be necessary briefly to review its progress in Italy during the period which we have traced in the life of Canova; and especially to ascertain the condition of art, and the state of taste, when he fixed his resi-

dence in the Roman capital. The difficulties which were to be surmounted, and the antagonists with whom he had to contend, on this his more direct and public entry on the grand theatre of action, will be thus readily appreciated, and the merits of his future labours more clearly discernible.

In the *fifteenth* century, the fine arts, which till then had flourished, rather from their connection with those of utility, than from any abstract knowledge of the beautiful and the elegant, assumed additional importance as national causes; and while they were thus cultivated with the ardour of increasing interest, they were improved by the vigorous efforts of fresh and unshackled intellect. In the *sixteenth*, political causes, more remotely connected with real patriotism, and an ostentatious desire of splendour, not a love of pure refinement, operated in the promotion of all the arts. Sculpture, indeed, was practised with every success in point of magnificence, which power, riches, and talents will assuredly

command; but purity and simplicity of design disappeared in proportion as grandeur and novelty were pursued. Genius hovered on the very confines of incredibility;—its creations derived their elements solely from an imagination lofty—awful—and imposing. But the sympathies of human feeling were overwhelmed, not heightened, by these visionary forms of gloomy sublimity and power. While every deviation from nature and from simplicity was exaggerated in the sculpture of the *seventeenth* century, the grandeur of preceding art was lost in the prettinesses of affectation, and nobleness and strength, in forced attitude and unideal expression. The chisel was injudiciously exercised in emulation of the pencil, exhibiting in its productions the jarring combination of energetic execution, employed on mannered and feeble conceptions. As we advance, degradation, poverty, and destitution of originality increase, till, finally, at the commencement of the *eighteenth* century, pedantic learning—a poetry of con-

ceit—and useless metaphysics, constitute almost the only signs of intellectual vitality.

From 1748 to 1796, Italy enjoyed nearly fifty years of profound repose. But during this season of security and peace, no improvement was accomplished, and little encouragement given in the fine arts. In sculpture, not a single monument, remarkable even for magnitude, far less excellent in design, was attempted, till the sepulchral erections in Rome by the subject of these memoirs, announced the presence of a happier epoch. Circumstances, indeed, occurred during this interval highly favourable to the future restoration of art; but the labours of genius cannot be forced; and perhaps there never was, and never can be a reformation in art, effected by direct imitation in the first instance, even of the most perfect models. Some Mind of transcendant powers arises, who, by patient and well-directed training, gradually recovers the pristine elegance and purity which had disappeared. Previous events, however, may predispose the

general taste to receive and to appreciate this renewed beauty. Such events there were ushering in, like the dawn, the glories of the coming day, when Canova appeared to hail its approach, and to realize its anticipations.

Researches into antiquity, in relation to the arts, began to be prosecuted with ardour, both by artists and men of letters, and under advantages peculiar to this age. The excavations of the buried cities at Naples were daily disclosing remains of classic elegance, less imperfect from the ravages of time, and extending to a greater variety of form, than those hitherto known in existence. These were carefully collected, commented upon, and published; while similar exertions were thus roused in the Roman states, and in Tuscany, where, though no such mines of fresh riches could be boasted, yet much might be done by the illustration of those ancient treasures which they had long possessed. These pursuits had the most direct refe-

rence to sculpture; and though their influence did not reach the leading principles or master lines of art, they at least introduced elegance and correctness in the accessories; but what was of vital importance, they recalled the attention to the more simple style, and unaffected graces of antiquity, which had long disappeared in the ostentation and pretence of modern invention [1].

[1] Charles III. of Naples extended a munificent patronage to the excavations and Museum at Portici, principally at instigation of his minister the Marquis Tanucci, the Colbert of Naples. Yet there was something extremely illiberal in printing only a few copies of the Drawings and Transactions of the Academy, which were reserved for *royal presents*. This Academy, established expressly for the collecting and illustrating the antiquities in the Museum at Portici, consisted originally of the following individuals:—Mazzocchi, Zarillo, Carcani, Galliani, il Baron Ronca, Niccolo Ignara, Camillo Padani, Pianara, Castelli, Aula, Monti, Giordano, Bajardi, Valetta, Pratillo, Cercuto, il P. della Torre, and il P. Tangi. The exclusive method observed by the court in the publication of the antiquities, was supplied by the industry and liberality of private individuals; among whom may

Among the principal causes of the decline of taste, and of the arts, during the seventeenth, and more particularly in the eighteenth century, is to be enumerated a system of criticism, which vitiated the public mind with false ideas of excellence, while it misled the judgment of the artist

be mentioned Card. Querini, the Marquis Maffei, Rossi, the two Venuti, and our minister Sir William Hamilton. At Rome, Cardinal Albani cherished similar studies, and in his elegant villa emulated the retreats of her most refined Patricians of ancient days. Here he converted antiquarians into men of taste, and artists into antiquarians. He was the patron, and almost the instructor of Winkleman—of Mengs—of Tantoni —of Raffei—of Baldani, &c. To him also that precious collection, the Museum of the Capitol, owes its existence, begun by Clement XII. In Tuscany, Leopold, amid his schemes of general improvement, was too sagacious to overlook the arts; but the country of Michael Angelo afforded then no sculptor capable of improving the opportunities thus afforded by princely munificence, and Leopold could only prepare the way by the institution of academies, and by splendid publications of the antiquities in the Florentine museums and galleries.

by erroneous principles. This originated in France in the latter part of the reign of Lewis XIV. and, continuing progressively to augment, it extended its influence at an early period to Italy. The diffusion of more correct opinions, and of sounder canons of criticism, must therefore be considered as no unimportant auxiliary in the succeeding reformation. The writings of Algarotti— Mengs — Hamilton— Milizia, combining practical experience with the results of ingenious observation, were at this time in the hands of every one, and very generally disseminated better notions, highly favourable to the introduction of the purer, more simple, but less ostentatious style of Canova's first productions. In short, during the last twenty-five years of the eighteenth century, a general movement of intellect, like the incipient heavings of a long becalmed ocean, was to be observed; but time elapsed before any motion animated the deep stagnation in which the fine arts languished. Advances were

rapidly made in philosophy—in literature —in works of utility;—sculpture still remained debased and neglected. We have seen that the early studies of Canova were conducted solely by his own ideas of excellence, and directed by his own conceptions of the methods by which it was to be attained. When he removed from his native Venice, no impression had yet been made there: she even lay beyond the circle of improvement; and he left her without artists, and without academies, such as were established in several cities of Italy. For several years subsequently to his arrival in Rome, the same languor continued to prevail; and his own labours were the first to dispel the corruptions of taste, and to excite the tardiness of patronage [1]. The propitious state of things, as now detailed,

[1] Storia della Scultura, tom. iii.; Memorie per le Belle Arte, in Italia a Roma; Manuscript Correspondence of the Count S. Giovanni and the Abbate Milizia, in the Library of Vicenza; Giornale Arcadico, &c. &c.

did not, therefore, aid in the slightest degree to form the genius or the style of this artist: it merely contributed to the favourable reception, and finally to the just appreciation of his works. The age was prepared in some measure to hail a reformer, but seemed incapable by its own energies of producing one. Canova at this crisis appeared, than whom, perhaps, no illustrious name ever owed less to external circumstances, in the cultivation of talents, or whose reputation is less dependant on splendid opportunities, not created by himself, of exerting them.

At the epoch of his arrival in Rome, painting was in a more fallen condition than it had been even some time before; as will sufficiently appear from the manner in which the resolution to ornament St Peter's with the master-pieces of modern art was accomplished. Subleyras executed his picture, when he was already reduced to the greatest weakness. Peter Bianchi, a promising artist, was surprised by death, and left an

unfinished sketch. Manchini, an excellent disciple of Cignani, was called upon to work in his decrepitude, and with trembling hand performed what little he could, but very unequal to his former efforts. Placedo Costanzi produced a picture which can hardly be termed middling. Pompeo Battoni managed his subject better than the others; but from some cause the picture was not copied in Mosaic, according to intention with which all were executed. When at length a truly splendid production might justly have been expected from the science of Mengs,—he also was snatched away by death, the last and chief of a school, which had shed a temporary lustre on the labours of the pencil [1].

Nor was the condition of the sister art at this time more flourishing. The Roman, then, as now, the only school of sculpture in Italy, was reduced to a few artists, whose almost sole employment consisted in making restorations of antiques for foreigners, or for the Museum of the Vati-

[1] See Memorie per le Belle Arti. Roma 1786.

can. Of these, many still remain to show the wretched state of the art. If an entire work was attempted, it was merely a copy of some ancient statue; and if by chance an artist aspired to an original composition, it exhibited a performance, made up of plagiarisms from ancients and moderns, united with the unmeaning expression, extravagant action, and mannered execution of existing taste. Of these sculptors, the rivals of Canova on his first coming to Rome, and of whom, many were long his cotemporaries, the most celebrated are the following:

Agostino Penna, a native of Rome, had lately executed a statue of Pius VI., still in the sacristy of the Vatican, which, not departing in the least from the accustomed observances of his predecessors [1], presents a mechanical figure, without nobleness of expression, or even ordinary selection in the arrangement of the drapery. His sta-

[1] Bernini sculptured the statues of *his Popes*, with a corner of the *paludamentum*, or upper garment, folded over the knee. This practice his successors religiously followed, as if it had formed part of the ritual.

tues of two Angels in the church of San Carlo, *sul corso*, are still less original, the only passable parts being exactly copied from almost similar figures in the Jesuits' church, by Rusconi.

Le Brun, a Frenchman, but long resident in Rome, was esteemed a great artist in portraits, being particularly happy in the likenesses of his busts. His statue of Judith in the church of San Carlo, however, shews him to have been incapable of original works [1].

Pacilli carried the affectation of this school to the height of extravagance, as may be observed in his statue of David, in the same church of San Carlo, of which the air and attitude more resemble those of an opera dancer, than of "Israel's royal bard."

Pacetti (Vicenza) had produced a few unimportant works, but was then best known as a restorer of antiques, in which capacity he displayed considerable skill;

[1] This artist was the first who attempted a bust of Pius VI.

as also Cavacippi, who in this department was the most famous artist in Italy.

Bracci and Sibilla, sculptors of the tomb of Benedict XIV. in St Peter's, a monument which discovers the lamentable state of the art at this period.

Thomasso Righi exhibited a certain mannered execution of petty fancies, which captivated common observers, as having something of novelty and prettiness. He was a great favourite with pretended artists, and would-be connoisseurs.

Angelini (Giuseppe) was one of the most celebrated sculptors at this time in Italy. One of his best works, the statue of Piranese the engraver, had been finished a few months previous to our artist's arrival, and procured for its author great reputation [1]. Angelini certainly never produced a better figure than this; but the design, and even much of the detail, is copied from an antique of the philosopher Zeno.

Ceracchi, a Roman youth, promised at

[1] It is now in a cellar of the Palazzo Braschi. "*Sic transit.*"

this time to become great; but afterwards engaging in politics, he neglected his studies, and was slain in a foreign land, far from the peaceful arts, and the security of his profession.

Of foreign artists, who made only a temporary stay at Rome for the purposes of study, several Germans had acquired reputation. Bench and Jusson, English students, were likewise distinguished from the crowd. Sergiel, the Swede, had lately finished a Diomede, and a group of Love and Psyche, which procured his election into the French Academy. The merits of these and of other names, however, could confer few claims to lasting renown; and their works left every thing to be accomplished, while they presented nothing to be feared, by the distinguished restorer of succeeding art.

Of all those, who were at this time cotemporaries of Canova in Italy, and consequently in Europe, no one could thus participate in the glory of that propitious revolution, which, before the close of the century,

his works had effected. The name of Flaxman alone will divide with his, the applauses of posterity. Flaxman had already displayed a judicious and fearless disregard of the conventional modes by which art was then enslaved, being distinguished at Rome for devotion to the study of the antique, and for that deep feeling of its simplicity and severer beauties, which have since characterised his productions. Equal to, perhaps, in some respects, surpassing Canova in fertility of invention, and in strength of original conception; he falls beneath him in facility of execution, in beauty and grace of expression, and in exquisite delicacy of finish. Had the English artist remained in Italy, he certainly would have proved a rival to be feared, and would have shared with the Venetian, the glory of reforming modern sculpture [1].

[1] The Italian artists and cognoscenti are ever ready to acknowledge the merits of Flaxman, but complain that his works are not sufficiently known on the Continent. He is thus honourably mentioned by the Count Cicognara: "Si *Flaxman* avesse avuto pari al-

Such was the state of the art, and such the genius of the principal sculptors, by whom it was exercised, when Canova arrived in Rome, on the 28th of December 1780 [1]. From the former, it will sufficiently appear, that the general activity, and spirit of improvement, which had already begun to distinguish the age, had not yet imparted its excitement to sculpture; while the latter equally shews that its professors were little calculated, either to create op-

la facolta dell' inventare, e del comporre, il merito di modellare e dello scolpire, avrebbe certamente una gran parte nella gloria di una prospera revoluzione di quest' arte; null' ostante gli debbe moltissimo, poi che quanto di lui si cognosce servi grandamente a svegliare da una certa letargia monotona, e far resurgere il gusto dello stile aureo, e severo dell' antichità, ch' egli seppe applicare alle sue invenzioni." Storia della Scultura, tom. iii. This praise is afterwards modified, by stating that the severity is perhaps exaggerated, and therefore apt to lead into the false, "in modo stesso che le poesie di Ossian, potrebbero esser guida periculosa a chi le prendesse a modello, quantunque ottimi originali."— Ibid. The Poems of Ossian, through *Cisarotti's* translation, are well known, and much admired in Italy.

[1] Letters of Canova. Letter to Falier, dated Rome, 30th December 1780.

portunities, or to turn to advantage the circumstances of the times.

In consequence of the very honourable and pressing introductions with which Canova had been furnished by his friends and patrons at Venice, he was received by the Cavaliere Zuliani in the most gracious and hospitable manner. In the Venetian Palace, the splendid abode provided by the Republic for her ambassadors at the Papal Court, he was entertained as an inmate and a guest;—in its present possessor, finding at once a patron and a friend. The accounts, then, which have hitherto appeared, in various works, of the distress which assailed the young and unprotected artist, on his first arrival in the Roman capital;—of the neglect with which he was treated by the Venetian Minister;—of the repulses he experienced from other noblemen, to whom application was made; and of his being at length discovered and relieved by Sir William Hamilton,—are without foundation [1].

[1] For these accounts, see various periodical works, both foreign and domestic, and the writings of English

Zuliani was one of the last enlightened, and generous protectors of the arts, among the old nobility of Venice. Without having acquired much technical knowledge of the subject, or profoundly investigating the principles of theoretic beauty, he possessed an excellent natural taste, strengthened by familiar intercourse with the most esteemed artists of the time. To these advantages, were united a rare modesty of disposition, and distrust of his own judgment, which rendered him anxious, on all occasions of importance, to obtain the opinions of the most distinguished judges, before fixing his final determination on any subject connected with the fine arts [1]. The love cherished by this nobleman for these pursuits, and the applauses bestowed

and other travellers. The statements in the text are supported by Canova's own letters, by the evidence of Falier, who says that his friend was received by the Ambassador, and entertained in his Palace, "con la piu cortese ospitalità;" and also by different other means of private and correct information.

[1] Aveva però la rara qualità di una modestia infinita, riportandosi sempre all' opinione degli artisti, e dei veri intelligenti, &c.—Cicog. To him, the Mu-

on the early labours of Canova, which proclaimed the merits of the young sculptor, doubtless contributed greatly to strengthen the recommendations which had been presented in his favour. At the same time, not acting the patron from mere ostentation, or with little regard to merit in the object, the Ambassador was solicitous of judging for himself, while his disposition rendered him no less desirous of knowing the sentiments which would be entertained at Rome, on the productions of his protegé.

Having discharged the immediate duties of hospitality, and such as it is said he had partly promised to the youth himself, previously to his own election as representative of the Republic; Zuliani's next care, therefore, was to cause the model of Dædalus and Icarus to be transmitted from Venice [1]. As soon as this composition had arrived in Rome, the

seum of Antiquity, belonging to the library of St Mark's, is indebted for some beautiful specimens of Greek sculpture,—the colossal foot,—heads of two Fauns, *male* and *female*, &c.

[1] In a work which the author has read, Canova is

most celebrated artists and connoisseurs were invited to meet in the Venetian Palace, in order to examine a new work of art. Among the number were Volpato the engraver, Battoni the painter, Cadef the sculptor [1], Gavin Hamilton the painter, whose work, "*Schola Italicæ Picturæ*," was then much read and admired; the Abbate Puccini, so justly celebrated for his knowledge and taste; with many others who usually attended the learned and elegant assemblies, which were frequently convened in the splendid saloons of the Envoy.

The trepidation with which Canova accompanied these distinguished individuals to the apartment, where stood his last performance,—that on which his present, and now in some measure his future fame depended, may easily be imagined. "Before we proceed to the examination of the

described as carrying this model on his own shoulders from one nobleman's house to another!

[1] So this word is written by Italians, and in private communications to the Author: the more correct orthography is Shadow, pronounced Shadof.

work," said the Ambassador, addressing his friends, " permit me, Gentlemen, to introduce the artist," presenting Antonio at the same time, who till then had only been noticed as a guest. Placed around the group, each surveying it with the strictest scrutiny,—a deep silence prevailed among the different members of the company. What trying moments were these to the feelings of its author! No one could venture directly to condemn, where correctness of expression, and fidelity in the imitation of nature were so conspicuous; yet each was averse to hazard the first opinion on a style, so different from that of existing art; the simple beauties of which, as compared with the affected and ostentatious manner then prevailing, seemed to border on poverty of effect, and timidity of hand;—every one appeared anxious rather to learn the sentiments of the others, than to express his own. At length Hamilton advanced, and cordially embracing the trembling artist, congratulated him on the specimen of talent then exhibited, and

on the methods of study which it was thence evident he had pursued; advising him strenuously to prosecute the same course of constantly referring to nature, but recommending in addition, an assiduous and careful attention to the sculpture of antiquity [1]. The subsequent applauses of all present fully justified the praises thus bestowed. It was on this occasion, as already mentioned, that even artists were deceived by the exquisite imitation of nature in the model, imagining it to have been originally taken from the living form.

The merits of the youthful artist being thus fully acknowledged, and the previous estimate of his talents confirmed, the Ambassador suffered no time to elapse before his promises of patronage were proved to have been sincere. It had long been the ardent wish of Canova, to be enabled to

[1] "Hamilton (Gavin) embracciandolo, parló in vero linquaggio dell' arte, gli diede il sano consilio, di associare alla diligente espressione della natura l'utilissimo studio dell antichità." Cicognara, Storia della Scultura, tom. iii. note *sub fin.*

undertake a group on some heroic subject;—a desire which had acquired additional fervour from the view of those glorious remains of ancient art, which he now first beheld in Rome. The contemplation of these monuments awakened in his mind a noble emulation—a soul-stirring impulse to attempt a work worthy of the place which they adorned. In the sublime yet simple beauties of these productions, also, he discovered in what he had hitherto been deficient—a style of art, commanding all the sympathies of the heart, while it clothes the loftiest conceptions of imaginative excellence,—where

> ——————" are expressed
> All that ideal beauty ever blessed
> The mind with, in its most unearthly mood,
> When each conception was a heavenly guest,—
> A ray of immortality [1]."

How heavily fall the evils of poverty, where they weigh down the energies of genius—clog the spirit of virtuous enterprise, and check the elevated aims of intellectual

[1] Byron.

ambition! These generous aspirations had till now been chilled by the consideration of his own narrow fortunes. Without the hope of obtaining a commission for a design such as he meditated [1], he could not afford the means of purchasing even the rude block from whence the future work was to be formed. At length, disclosing these views to his present patron, they were seconded in the most effectual and disinterested manner. The subject was left entirely to the choice of the artist; the material was to be ordered by the Ambassador; and when finished, if no other purchaser appeared, the group was to belong to him, on the payment of its full value.

The subject selected by Canova on this important occasion, was Theseus vanquishing the Minotaur; and the figures were to be of the heroic size, that is, larger than life. In less than three months from the

[1] "A magnificent monument—a group—a statue larger than life, was no longer thought of." Memorie per le Belle Arte, &c.

date of his arrival in Rome, the composition of the models was already begun, and a mass of statuary marble, which had cost 300 crowns, (about £.63 Sterling), arrived soon after. At sight of this, which crowned his long-cherished hopes, the breast of the young enthusiast seems to have been filled with delight; and eager to communicate his joys with the friends whom he had left behind in Venice, he writes in terms of high commendation, alternately praising the Ambassador, and describing the beauty of the marble [1].

On the work which now occupied his principal attention, Canova laboured with assiduous but concealed industry. He wrought during this period in an apartment of the Venetian Palace, to which no one was permitted to have access, the Ambassador alone being acquainted with the secret of his studies; and the group was

[1] One letter to Falier is dated from Rome, in the Palace of the Venetian Ambassador, 30th March 1781. Almost all of Canova's letters are very short; but he constantly writes with great naiveté and simplicity.

seen for the first time on the day when it was publicly exhibited. The motives in this conduct doubtless were various;—the diffidence of his own disposition;—the desire of perfecting himself in the knowledge of the antique, a study in some measure new, without having his methods remarked, or his progress scrutinized by others;—a wish to make, in the first instance, the proper impression both on his friends and on the public [1]. It could not escape his penetration, also, that the spirit of his productions, being directly opposed to the style and manner of cotemporary artists, he would consequently be exposed thus later, to the attacks of their hatred or their jealousy. But from whatever views it originated, this method continued strictly to be observed until the piece was finished. Steadiness and resolution in every thing connected with study, from the earliest period of his

[1] Sir Joshua Reynolds advises young artists not to permit their half-finished performances to be seen even by their friends, not only as it has a tendency to weaken the impressions which would otherwise be made by these, but also to relax their own industry. Discourses.

professional career, eminently distinguished the character whose development is now traced.

Rome seemed to inspire Canova with fresh ardour and increasing industry: to use the expression of a candid though friendly eulogist, "the departing day left him busily engaged, and the returning light found him again employed." Perceiving his deficiency in the conception of ideal beauty, he pursued with unremitting assiduity the means now presented, both of acquiring and of exercising this knowledge. The study of the ancient statues, in the different magnificent collections and museums of the capital, formed the constant occupation of a portion of each day; the remainder being dedicated to the labours of his secluded studio; where, not neglecting his long-cherished devotion to nature, the artist, in his present work, endeavoured to embody the lessons of elevated truth and exalted beauty thus impressed on his delighted mind. So ardently, indeed, were these

pursuits cultivated, and so entirely did professional advancement engross his care, that, as stated by an intimate friend, he might frequently be found at dawn, with his sketch-book or modelling apparatus, seated before the statues in the court of the *Capitol*, or the colossal figures ascribed to Phidias and Praxiteles on *Monte Cavallo* [1]. During this period, also, his evenings were no less profitably passed in the society of men of letters and of taste, to whom a residence in the palace of the Ambassador naturally introduced the person who enjoyed that advantage.

While he himself was thus diligent to improve the opportunities of his present situation, the friends of our artist at Venice had not been remiss in their endeavours to interest the Senate on his behalf. Their former applications for a small pension were not a little strengthened by the fa-

[1] Of the latter, even at a subsequent period of life, he made a constant morning study for years, in relation to his own improvement, and to establish the style of Phidias in the Elgin marbles.

vourable reception which his works had experienced at Rome, and were now aided by the representations of their own Ambassador. At length, about a year from his departure, after many delays, and considerable difficulties, arising rather from the novelty of the request than from any doubts of its propriety, a decree was obtained, dated 22d December 1781, " by which the Senate granted to Canova the annual pension of 300 ducats, limited to the term of three years, that he might in Rome perfect himself in his profession, and reflect honour on the Republic [1]."

During the period of which we now speak, the Theseus was not the only work on which Canova was employed. A statue of Apollo, about half the natural size, originally commissioned by the Senator

[1] The original document has been consulted; but being merely expressed in the technical forms of business, its insertion would be useless. The text expresses, nearly in the words of the grant, the only interesting details which it contains. This pension, at that time of such importance to Canova, did not much exceed £.60 Sterling *per annum.*

Rezzonico, and which afterwards passed into the possession of Marshal *Daru*, was finished at the same time, but conducted with less mystery than the more important production, forming rather an exercise than a labour, and serving as an ostensible occupation. In this performance, the god is represented in act of placing on his head a crown of laurel, as if just victorious in some musical or poetic contest; but though very beautiful, a work of this nature would scarcely have merited notice, did it not mark the first of Canova's triumphs in his earliest rivalry with cotemporaries at Rome. It so happened that this piece was finished about the same time, and exposed to public inspection along with the *Minerva Pacifica*, a statue of nearly similar dimensions, and one of the best works of *Angelini*, who has already been described as one of the first sculptors then in Italy. Notwithstanding this formidable competition, which, without striking excellences in the composition, must have altogether thrown into shade the work of a youth unknown

and unpatronized, the Apollo obtained general and very high applause. Comparisons were even made, little favourable to the Minerva. These circumstances could not fail of proving agreeable to the artist and to his friends. In his early letters, the former mentions them with great complacency, but with his usual and characteristic modesty [1].

The group which had so long formed the subject of secret solicitude and unwitnessed labour, was now finished. On this occasion, in order to give full effect to the surprise and eclat of its first exhibition, an entertainment was given by the Venetian Ambassador to the most celebrated artists, men of letters, and other distinguished characters then in Rome. No previous intimation of a work thus carefully concealed had yet transpired;—a model of

[1] Letters of Canova to Falier, dated from Rome 29th December 1781, and 2d March 1782; the originals of which are now in possession of the Abbate Cicogna. Copies were consulted by the Author. The statue was finished in February 1782. Falier—Cicognara—Paravia—Autographical List of Canova's Works—Private Correspondence of the Author.

the head of his victorious hero, purposely prepared by the artist, and placed in the apartments destined for the reception of the guests, was the first announcement of the new production. This beautiful and novel object, in such an assembly naturally attracted universal attention; and the whole company by degrees had collected around it. Various were the opinions on its forms—its expression—its subject; and keen were the disputes to which it gave rise. All were agreed that the cast must have been taken from a work of Grecian sculpture, and of great merit; but they were divided on what it represented, and where the original was to be found. Some affirmed that they had seen it in such a collection;—some said it was in a different gallery;—part maintained that such a personage of antiquity was pourtrayed;—others asserted a contrary statement;—in short, the acknowledged beauty of the piece was the only common sentiment which experienced no opposition. Seizing the proper occasion, when he perceived every one

to be thus deeply interested in the affair, "*Ebbene*," said the Ambassador, "*andiamo a vederne l'originale*;"—"Come, let us terminate these disputes by going to see the original [1]." All were astonished. What! the antique, about which so many conjectures had just been made, in the possession of their host! It seemed hardly credible; and they eagerly followed to where Canova's Theseus, victorious over his cruel foe, in all the brightness of recent finish, and placed to the best advantage, was disclosed to view. The effects produced by this unexpected sight, it is impossible to describe. Every feeling was absorbed in surprise, delight, and admiration. The work was universally pronounced to be one

[1] "L'Ambasciatore volle tal giorno tutt' i primarj artisti al suo pranzo, e tenne esposto quel gesso (della testa di Teseo), molte furono le opinioni di que professori, sulla nobilità, sulle forme, sulla espressione di quella testa," &c. Falier—Letters of Canova—Private Correspondence of the Author, &c. The exhibition of the Dædalus and Icarus, as formerly described, seems, in some accounts, to be confounded with this of the Theseus.

of the most perfect which Rome had beheld for ages; and artists, who afterwards pursued the sculptor with the envious malice of inferiority, were now silent, or hurried away by the unrestrained enthusiasm of the moment.

To the end of life, *(in fine della memoria,)* says one of his friends, Canova retained a fearful recollection of his feelings at this time; and was often heard to say, that death itself could not be more terrible than the mental sufferings which he endured while the earlier of these occurrences were passing. When such are the trembling sensibilities of genius, how great may be the evils inflicted by unthinking or injudicious criticism! They may extinguish for ever the flame of genuine inspiration,—lacerate the bosom which glows with the noblest and the best of sentiments,—or dash with irremediable sorrow a life which might have diffused knowledge and happiness [1]. Let him, then, who presumes to sit in judgment on the productions of talent—

[1] Recall the fate of Kirke White, and of the Author of Endymion.

be careful that the opinions which he delivers be matured by reflection, and dictated by truth:—he has arrogated to himself an awful responsibility, under which the imbecile and the corrupt must sink in disgrace or infamy.

Nor, while Canova was thus sensitively alive to glory and reputation, was he less awake to the claims of friendship and the ties of gratitude.

> "Genius and art—ambition's boasted wings,
> Our boast but ill deserve:—a feeble aid,
> *Heart-merit* wanting, mount we ne'er so high [1]."

No sooner was the triumph of his exertions thus assured at Rome, than casts of his work, with the most grateful and affectionate letters, were transmitted to his friends in Venice. Every accession of fame—every addition of prosperity—seemed more strongly to revive that attachment which bound him to the patrons of his youth, to whose early kindness he delighted to ascribe his future greatness. "*Non*," exclaims one of these friends, "*non doveva*

[1] Young.

io, per quanto io potessi, aggiunger lustro alle glorie sue? ma delle sue virtù che diro poi?" —" Ought I not, by my weak endeavours, to increase, if possible, the splendour of his glory? but of his virtues how shall I speak [1]?"

The work thus first establishing in Rome the fame of the sculptor, represents the victorious Theseus seated on the lifeless body of the monster, reposing after a conflict, which the exhaustion visibly pervading his whole frame proves to have been terrible. In the Minotaur, the artist has adopted that description of the ancient poets which best suits the purposes of art; and the form is human, with the head only of the animal whence the appellation is derived. In its gigantic limbs, carelessly thrown over a fragment of rock, the nerveless abandonment of death is well expressed; but it constitutes an accessory rather than

[1] The model which was thus sent to Falier, that nobleman presented to the Venetian Academy. This institution was then very ill managed, and the model perished. Falier.

a principal object, and the eye is with propriety arrested chiefly by the figure of Theseus. This marks a distinguished era in the studies and in the progress of Canova. Hitherto his style had been remarkable for beautiful simplicity and purity of natural expression: with these are now combined more elevated conceptions of grandeur and of truth;—forms nobler and more perfect;—a character more intellectual;—with less obvious dependence on mere imitation. We behold the artist, already master of every merely mechanical excellence and practical acquirement, now aspiring to higher attainments, and boldly committing himself to the suggestions of a refined and lofty imagination. The moral expression in the Theseus is noble and exalted, indicative of those generous feelings which arise from the consciousness of having achieved an honourable and useful enterprise. The forms are strictly antique, more especially in the contours of the head and torso: in the limbs there is perhaps less of refinement, with a greater resem-

blance to individual nature. The countenance, also, and the general cast of the figure, approach nearer to the robust mould of an Athleta, as exhibited in classic sculpture, than seems consistent with the more elegant and graceful proportions of heroic beauty [1]. The attitude is well calculated to give full development to the fine and vigorous form;—yet is there not a degree of indelicacy in being seated on the body of a slaughtered enemy, still warm with the lingering remains of life?

But whatever slight defects by the eye of fastidious criticism may be discovered in this work, they are quickly overlooked in that unbounded admiration which it excites, as compared with the existing resources of sculpture, and with coeval per-

[1] In this respect, it is curious to remark the striking difference in the same subject as treated by the same hand in 1782 and 1819. In the Theseus combating with the *Centaur*, the improvement is very great, as regards the union of elegance with strength. Both these works are at Vienna. The present one was purchased soon after its first exhibition by the Count de Fries.

formances in this department of art. In an age when the grand productions and pure principles of the ancient masters were no longer appreciated or understood;—when an original composition of the time is now never mentioned, or instanced only as an example of degraded taste [1];—in an age, too, when no extrinsic advantages of munificent patronage or of great undertakings served to create talent;—a youth unknown in Rome,—self-taught in every noble precept, and better feeling of the art,—in solitude and in silence,—unaided and alone, produced a work worthy of the best periods and happiest prosperity of sculpture. What wonder, then, if, by the discerning few, the Theseus was regarded with rapturous enthusiasm!—If it was hailed as the first effulgence of future glory, which, emanating from the same source, was destined to irradiate every province of the art. In tracing the whole course of its

[1] "Non è opera di quei ultimi tempi la quale avesse fatto parlare di se in quella generazione." Cicognara—Memorie per le Belle Arti—Visconti, &c.

history, a triumph of genius more complete does not occur,—a triumph rendered still more perfect, when this is considered as merely the prelude to exertions more astonishing, and to labours more excellent.

This work marks the termination of Canova's noviciate. We now behold him possessed of all the acquirements, and displaying those powers which constitute the great artist; opportunities of exercising these were alone wanting, a deficiency which in some measure was soon supplied. If great occasions naturally produce great men; superior minds mould to their own lofty purposes the common advantages which may be presented, and, from slight causes, often elicit splendid effects. A simple monument, raised by private gratitude to the memory of a deceased benefactor,—a design which, if committed to the most skilful of his cotemporaries, would have been productive of nothing now worthy of regard;—became in the hands of Canova the first means of resto-

ring taste, and one of the noblest works of modern sculpture.

To Volpato, who has rendered his own merits so conspicuous while he aided the introduction of a purer taste, by his engravings from the immortal labours of Raffaelle in the Vatican, Canova had been introduced, in like manner as to other artists frequenting the assemblies of his patron, the Ambassador [1]. But for the intimacy which followed, and which subsequently ripened into the most cordial friendship, he was indebted to the good offices of Scotch Hamilton, (*Hamilton il Scotto,*) as this painter was generally designated. Through the representations of the latter, also, soon after the exhibition of

[1] On their first appearance, the engravings of Volpato from the works of Raffaelle were eagerly purchased, and tended not a little to diffuse just ideas both among artists and patrons, and their value has continued to increase. They were executed from drawings, by the Spanish painter La Vega, who laboured constantly at this employment for the space of three years. These drawings are still preserved in the Vatican Museum, and fill 80 sheets.

the Theseus, a work which certainly proved what Hamilton asserted, that its author was the only sculptor in Rome, capable of conducting with propriety such an undertaking. Canova was accordingly selected by Volpato to erect a monument in honour of Clement XIV., the suppressor of the Jesuits, the collector of the Clementine Museum, and the author of those elegant letters, by which his family name, Ganganelli, has been rendered famous over Europe [1].

A deep and conscientious feeling of the obligations, under which he deemed himself to be placed, in regard to the pension bestowed by the Venetian Senate, deterred Canova from immediately accepting this

[1] The early and continued interest which Gavin Hamilton took in the welfare of Canova, together with the similarity of the name, may have given rise to the report, that Sir William Hamilton was his first patron, when all others had refused him assistance. The relation in the text is borne out, by Cicognara, Falier, Paravia, Tadini, &c. Canova's own letters, and by private letters to the author. The Cenotaph erected to the memory of Gavin Hamilton by Canova, is another proof of the grateful regard of the latter.

offer, however consonant with his inclinations, or favourable to his prospects. More than that period must elapse, before the work in question could be completed; while for the next three years, he considered his time and his occupations under the control of those by whom the means of remaining at Rome had in some measure been supplied. He resolved therefore to repair to Venice, and there to explain in person to the friends of his youth, by whom they might be laid before the Senate, his wishes and his views. Behold him then once more in that capital, uncertain as to his future destiny, now trembling on the eve of decision, by one of those events, which, though in after life it may fill the mind with amazement that their consequences could ever have been of importance, frequently determine the fate of the individual. Should the Senate refuse to put the most liberal construction on the terms upon which the pension originally had been granted, he was in no condition, without such assistance, to engage in the career now opened to his exertions. But the gene-

rosity of his patrons left their interesting protegé, whose noble character and valuable talents they could now appreciate, at full liberty in every respect to dispose of his time, and to direct his application as might appear most conducive to future improvement [1].

Canova had hitherto regarded a permanent establishment in Rome as a consummation, rather ardently to be desired, than confidently to be anticipated, and had consequently looked to Venice as his eventual home. On this account he had still retained possession of his studio near San Maurizio: this also was now resigned, and he bade farewel to a city always beloved as the first protector of his youth, and as the

[1] Ma non v'ha interesse né onore che possano macchiare la purità del Canova. Si domandano alla grand' opera più anni di assiduo lavore, nè si crede autorizzato ad accoglierla, se non ne sia prima disimpegnato dal fissato triennio cui l'obligava la ricevuta pensione.—Quindi vediamo ad un tempo il Canova in Venezia indeciso sul suo destino; ma vediamo tutti i suoi mecenati impegnarsi per una condescendenza, che la paterna dolcezza del Veneto Senato non sa contendere. Falier, &c. Letters.

country of early friends, but to which, except on a few casual visits, he never afterwards returned. About the same time, also, the Ambassador Zuliani was recalled from his diplomatic situation at the Court of the Holy See, having been elected by the Senate Plenipotentiary to the Ottoman Porte [1]. The hospitality of the Venetian Palace thus no longer awaited his acceptance, even had our artist on his return been inclined to avail himself of its advantages; but it was now time to present his talents in a more decided light to the public. At this period, therefore, in the *Strada Babbuino*, was first opened that studio, which so long continued to be one of the principal ornaments of Italy, and the daily resort of the most enlightened from every nation in Europe. Thus, in his twenty-fifth year, we behold Canova finally established at Rome, and though not yet the best known, decidedly the most accomplished artist of the age.

[1] His removal took place on the 9th June 1783. He was succeeded in Rome by Signior Andrea Memmo.

CHAPTER VI.

Difficulties and opposition experienced by Canova during the early part of his progress—Anecdotes—Tomb of Ganganelli—Letter of Milizia—Tomb of Rezzonico—Remarks on, description, and comparative merits of these two monuments—Their importance in illustrating the style and merits of the artist—Other labours—Statue of Psyche—Anecdotes—Group of Cupid and Psyche—Anecdotes—Canova receives offers of an establishment in Russia—Monument of Emo—Generosity of the Venetian state—Group of Venus and Adonis—Anecdotes—French Revolution—Canova retires to Possagno—Enumeration of, and remarks on Canova's paintings.

THE present era in the life of our illustrious artist must be viewed as alike precious and interesting to all, whatever may be the particular province of exertion. At the momentous period, when he had already much to lose, and every thing to gain by his first measures in an arduous profession, his conduct affords a rare example of that moral fortitude which despises the censures of

malevolence, or of prevailing error;—of that most dignified of all self-denials—rejection of the alluring celebrity of cotemporary but ill-founded praise, in comparison with the distant, though not contingent approbation of a more enlightened age. Young, unprotected, unknown, and poor, he commenced his public career, with every obstacle to encounter as a reformer, and under the strongest inducements to pursue the path, however false, which conducted to present honour and emolument. Yet, steady to those principles which his own native discernment, and the judgments of a few valued though uninfluential friends, encouraged him to believe true, he boldly persevered in a noble but unpopular course. At the same time, nature had apparently little qualified him for such a contest. His disposition, — retiring, humble, modest, and diffident in the extreme, was the very reverse of the ardent and opiniative temperament which holds at nought, as opposed to its own notions, the sentiments of the

world. Nor could very sanguine hopes be derived from the success of preceding efforts. The group of Theseus and the Minotaur had indeed elicited merited commendation among the discerning few; but by the great majority of artists and of connoisseurs, the elevated yet unobtrusive beauties of its simple style remained unappreciated. A facile and brilliant execution concealed from observation the deficiency of vigorous and just design in the works of cotemporaries; and in the fine arts, the number of those is small, who judge from other than those external qualities which merely address the grosser senses,—or who penetrate to the loftier excellencies of sentiment and of feeling. In proportion, then, as reformation in sculpture thus generally appeared unnecessary, were real defects great, and obstacles in attempting to remove them numerous. To rectify the corruptions of taste, is in all cases more difficult than to elevate to maturity an infant art; but the aberrations now most essential to be repressed,

were exactly those which, by the many in all ages, have been regarded as the indications of genius, of imagination, and talent.

Accordingly, Canova early began to experience that opposition with which ignorance and prejudice assail merit, when it presumes to rise superior to surrounding mediocrity. To his principles, both of theory and of practice, was opposed the whole host of artists, at this time directed by methods altogether different. Some, therefore, made it their constant study to depreciate the youthful aspirant—as timid in execution, constrained in manner, and poor in fancy. They represented him as one capable of careful and correct finishing, when guided by the more brilliant conceptions of another, but who, if left to his own resources, produced works "*senza gusto, senza brio, e senza grazia*[1]." Others, with greater appearance of candour, and of kindly dispositions, but in reality with

[1] "Without taste, without fire, and without grace;" the expression of one of those now forgotten cotemporaries,—the echo of all.

more dangerous insinuation, affected to commiserate the mistake of a young man, otherwise possessing some talent, who, from bad instruction, had misunderstood the true object of art, and was pursuing a mode of study in the highest degree erroneous and injudicious. Nature, in their estimation, was an imperfect guide, which would conduct to meanness of expression and poverty of effect, reducing the arts to the primitive imbecility of their infant state. To invest her simplicity with grandeur and with dignity, it was necessary, they maintained, to imitate nature—not directly, but through the medium of those principles which *Michael Angelo* or *Bernini* and their scholars had established. Nor was it only professional opposition that Canova had to combat. Merit has ever to pay a drawback to the vanity of cotemporaries, in proportion to its superiority or success. In the present instance, some were filled with envy of the reputation acquired by the sculptor on the exhibition of his first production;—many were jealous of his good for-

tune in obtaining the monument on which he was now employed ;—while others were apprehensive lest his future fame should eclipse their own valued importance. Various causes thus combined their influence to render the first years of his residence in Rome one continued and painful struggle, not to attain pre-eminence, but to support a species of persecution.

A hostility, in many respects so ungenerous, could not fail deeply to wound a heart disposed to cherish every disinterested feeling, imbued with the genuine love of art, and only as its promotion was concerned presuming to secede from the opinions of the age. Of the few confidential letters, indeed, written at this period, hardly one now remains which does not revert to the unhappiness thus occasioned [1]. The

[1] " Poiche modesto e timido per indole, tenerissimo di eta, *contornato da opposizione*, egli non vedeva che ostacoli al suo modo di studiare e di produrre. Stette egli in forse, se quella sua maniera di videre e di sentire nelle arte, era la giusta e la vera, e per il suo *grandissimo turbato e perplessita e per la sorda persecu-*

different conclusions formed by friends, however, in order to explain the causes which enabled him to bear up against these machinations of his adversaries, unfitted as he was to support, and abhorring as he did any approach to a personal contest, appear extremely unsatisfactory. The very modesty of his disposition,—the retiring sensibility of his nature,—qualities seemingly regarded as principally disqualifying him from rebutting the rougher assailments of life, proved in reality the means of his easier escape. Indifferent spectators were thus quickly disposed to declare for the less violent party; and the more generous of his adversaries became ashamed of continuing attacks, where scarcely defence, and no retaliation were attempted [1]. Personali-

zione, e disprezzo degli antagonisti, e per le dittatorie sentenze degli amatori ed intellegenti," &c. Cicognara—Lettere di Canova—Falier, &c.

[1] " L'umiltà, la schiettezza, il candore, la inarrivable sua modestia seppero agevolmente impadronirsi di tutti i cuori, e farsi il tesero di Roma.
Falier, (Giuseppe).

ties, ever the most inveterate source of animosity, had thus no existence on one part, and on the other were soon deprived of rancour. In a professional capacity, this unassuming character was productive of still greater advantages. Though at this period Canova was frequently assailed by the most painful uncertainty, whether the principles which he pursued were well grounded, since they were so generally and so directly opposed to the opinions and practice of the times, his diffidence and reserve only urged him the more eagerly, silently and without ostentation, to establish their truth. Not suffering his constancy to be subdued by occasional despondency, nor to be led away by the vanity of proving that he could surpass his rivals, even in their own manner,—he subjected his views to a rigid examination,—he compared them with nature,—he flew to the Capitol—to the Vatican, where he confronted them with the antique. The result always calmed his solicitude, and soothed his anxiety. With renovated confidence he returned to his studies, and in solitude la-

boured to perfect his style, without boasting to his friends, or triumphing over his opponents.

Nor indeed was this modest reserve respecting the merits of his own practice, maintained only while his fame was still to be secured;—it marked his conduct through life. To the observations even of friends, whether commendatory or critical, he rarely replied. "To praise," he used to say, "what can I answer? To the censures of well-wishers I must also listen in silence; for if wrong, their feelings would be hurt by telling them so,—if correct, I endeavour to profit by the remarks." Hence it frequently occurred, that former criticisms were recalled to the remembrance of those who had expressed them by the artist afterwards pointing out the consequent correction. Or sometimes the friendly critic was surprised by the exhibition of a model, representing a group or a single figure in unison with some idea previously suggested, and which had met the approbation of the sculptor, who, though a silent, thus proved to be no inattentive or indocile ob-

server. " Our thoughts," he was wont to remark, " may be expressed in various ways; — one speaks— another writes. I also have my peculiar mode;—in my chisel I find words and letters." A particular instance will illustrate this amiable modesty. About the period of which we now speak, an English nobleman [1] had objected to the group of Theseus and the Minotaur, " that it was too cold, at the same time bestowing just commendation on the simplicity and purity of the style; recommending to preserve the same manner in another similar performance, but to select a more impassioned subject." To these observations the artist listened in silence, but in a short time after produced the model of that most lovely work—the group of Cupid and Psyche, in which the latter is recumbent, and the former bending over the object of his affections. To his Lordship's expressions of surprise and pleasure, the unassuming sculptor merely replied, " *Pre-*

[1] The late Lord Bristol, who with all his eccentricities was no mean judge of the fine arts.

ferisco costantemente di rispondere a quanto convenevole osservato più tosto collo scarpello, che colle parole." " I always prefer to answer a judicious observation rather with my chisel than by words [1]." The same freedom from all arrogance or pretension, was not less apparent in the conduct of Canova, in regard to public criticism. When urged to refute certain injurious remarks on his works, which had appeared in some of the literary journals,—with that noble candour which usually accompanies exalted genius, he answered, " *Le mie opere sono in pubblico, e il pubblico ha tutto il diretto di giudicarle ;—ma io mi sono proposito di non rispondere a qualunque critica osservazione altrimente, che coll' impiegare ogni studio per meglio fare.*" " My works are before the public, and that public has every right to pass judgment upon them ; but for my own part, it is my resolution not

[1] Or as the anecdote has been differently reported to the author, " Amo meglio parlare colle mane che colla lingua." " I love better to speak with my hands than with my tongue."

to reply to any critical observation whatsoever, otherwise than by exerting every effort to do better."

Natural inclination, by thus disposing him to disregard, finally enabled Canova to overcome the rivalry of opposition, and the persecutions of malignancy. In the solitude of his workshop he found not merely an asylum,—but while, in sedulous application to his profession, he sought peace, he obtained by rapid improvement the means of victory.

Nearly two years of unremitting toil both of body and mind were consumed in arranging the design, and in composing the models for the Tomb of Ganganelli [1]. The labours which he supported at this time were indeed very great,—both as he performed every thing with his own hand, being as yet unable to remunerate the services of others,—and as he realized on the present occasion the long meditated design of executing the original models in a similar manner, and of the same dimensions

[1] The years 1783—84.

with the projected work. It had all along been the practice of modern masters to finish from previous studies, often of very diminutive proportions. Michael Angelo indeed became sensible of, and in the latter part of his life endeavoured to rectify, this error [1]; but as among his successors an almost extemporaneous execution was deemed an indication of talent, his late example in this respect was disregarded, and statues were very generally executed from mere sketches. The disadvantages of this method, we have seen, were early detected by Canova, though opportunity had been

[1] We are informed by Vasari, that towards the close of life, Michael Angelo began to study his compositions in sculpture with more care, making models, not only for statues, but also for architectural ornaments, of the full size, which he used even to place at their proper height, in order to judge of the true effect of the future work, (Vit. di M. Angelo). Cellini likewise observes, "E nel Buonaroti si vede che avendo egli esperimentato tutti due i detti modi, ciò, di fare le statue secondo i *modelli piccoli* e *grandi*; alla fine accorto della differenza, usò il *secondo modo*, &c. Dell' Orif. e della Scult. &c.

denied of applying the proper remedy, which was now found so completely effective, that in no one instance was it afterwards abandoned by its inventor [1].

The difficulties to be overcome in composing without assistance, figures of a colossal magnitude, while the methods of working such masses of the material were unknown, and to be acquired from personal experience, may readily be conceived. The continued fatigue, the frequent failures would have discouraged any mind not bent on excelling. One day a friend entering his studio unexpectedly, discovered the artist sitting overcome with labour and despondency;—on remarking that much trouble might be spared by proceeding in the usual way, Canova, in the spirit of genuine enthusiasm, replied, "I am attempting to surpass those who pursue customary modes, and am prepared to encounter the greatest obstacles as the price of

[1] Letter of Canova to Falier, dated "Roma, 26. Agosto 1784."

success." To the attainment of this superiority, every thought was directed, and every moment devoted. Not satisfied with the result of his first essays, though productive of two very beautiful figures, the allegorical statues which ornament the tomb of Clement he twice modelled, and that of Temperance was substituted for one of Piety [1]. The models and the design being finally adjusted, upwards of two years more were spent in the most laborious diligence before the monument was completed.

At length, early in 1787, was exposed to public inspection, this long-expected work, —a performance which alone would have established the name of Canova as the greatest artist of modern times, since it

[1] The two first figures of Piety and Meekness are still preserved among the works of Canova, though never executed in marble: the latter is but slightly different from that on the monument. Piety, however, is much changed from that of Temperance, by which it was replaced, the one being in a standing, the other in a recumbent posture. Both these figures are very beautiful, but there is greater variety in those which now compose the monument.

justly ranks among those illustrious productions that form, while they announce, the commencement of a new and improving era. Standing itself in full and glorious light, it directs the eye from the gloom of preceding feebleness and corruption, to a splendid prospect of renovated grandeur and beauty.

Without entering into the details of the first exhibition, when the voices of prejudiced critics, or of disappointed rivals, were drowned in the acclamations of otherwise universal praise, it may suffice here to introduce the translation of a letter written by Milizia, "that terrible Aristarchus of the arts,"—"that bitter critic who never ceased to exclaim against modern arts and artists[1]". This document will not only supply an excellent description of the work, but while is thus shewn the estimation in which it was generally held, the observations remain proofs of correct judgment honourable alike to the writer as to the sculptor.

[1] Cicognara, Paravia.

« A singular phenomenon, my Dear Count, wherefore I write to you,—what a proem! In the church of the Holy Apostles, near the entrance to the sacristy, and fronting down one of the side aisles, the sculptor Antonio Canova, a Venetian, has erected a Mausoleum to Pope Ganganelli. The basement is divided into two plinths. Upon the first sits a beautiful female, called Meekness—meek as the Lamb which reposes at her side. Upon the second division is the urn, over which, on the opposite side, reclines Temperance, another beautiful figure. From behind rises a pedestal supporting a seat of antique form, where full of dignity, and clothed in a most becoming manner, (*papalissimamente*), is seated his Holiness, with the right arm and hand extended horizontally, in attitude of commanding—of pacifying—of protecting. Such is the monument. The whole is of white marble, except the lower basement, the pedestal and chair, which are of a greyish colour, (*Lumacello*). The harmony is delightful, the light proceeding

from above and in moderated splendour, whence every part comes out with great sweetness. The composition is of that simplicity, which seems facility itself,—yet is the very essence of difficulty. What repose, what elegance, what disposition! The sculpture and the architecture, in the whole, as also in the details, is in the style of antiquity. Canova is an ancient, I know not whether of Athens, or of Corinth; I feel assured, however, that if in Greece, and during the happiest ages of Grecian art, it had been required to sculpture a Pope, the subject would not have been treated in a manner different from the present. During the twenty-six years which I have passed here, *in questa urbe del orbe*, I have never witnessed any work so generally applauded. Of all the productions of modern sculpture, this is declared by the most liberal and intelligent artists to approach nearest to the antique. Even the ex-Jesuits themselves cannot forbear praising and admiring this marble Ganganelli. A circumstance surely to be regarded as a miracle of that Pope,

who will henceforth derive no less glory from this monument, than from having suppressed that order! It is indeed a perfect work, of which were there any doubts, they would be dispelled by the very censures of the *Michael-Angelists*, the *Berninists*, the *Borominists*, who, heaven pity them! regard as defects the greatest of its beauties,—exclaiming against the drapery, the forms, the expressions—as antique! Our friend, Pietro Vitali, is now employed upon an engraving of this monument. I congratulate myself then, with all the Venetians. I earnestly wish that the young artists may follow the noble career of Canova, and that the fine arts may again be restored.—I wish much indeed, but I hope little [1]," &c.

[1] This letter is dated from Rome, 21st April 1787, that is very soon after the work which it describes was finished. It was originally published by Cicognara, and subsequently among the "Lettre Inedite" of Gamba. Francisco San Giovanni, Count of Vicenza, to whom it is addressed, was one of those who, by their writings, aided the restoration of art. He died in

The engraving mentioned above, is the first of a splendid series in folio, representing his principal works, which was published in successive plates under the inspection of Canova. In the dedications of the different subjects, have been offered lasting tributes of gratitude, or of respect, to all of his most esteemed friends, and to many of his professional patrons. Among those consecrated to friendship, the length and grateful terms in which it is couched, distinguish the address affixed to the present work, and shew how warmly the best feelings of our nature were cherished by the author. This plate is dedicated to the ambassador Zuliani, who was then absent from Italy as Venetian envoy at the Ottoman Court,—a circumstance still more honourable to both parties :—

" Yours are my works, because I am yours. And, therefore, to dedicate them to you, without having previously informed you of my intention, is not presumption, but

1806, aged 81. Many of his MS. works on art, are still to be seen in the public library at Vicenza.

a duty. I aspire, if possible, to do something worthy of that generous protection which supported me in the arduous career of art, that there may remain a proof of this age possessing its Pericles. But though my talents may prove unequal to so great an attempt, none can retain a deeper or more heartfelt sense of your beneficence in a sincere, tender, and respectful admiration of your splendid virtues [1]."

[1] This is the only one of these dedications which extends to any length, the others generally containing merely the name of the individual. The present is addressed in the following unaffected manner: "A sua Eccel^za il Sig. Cav. Gerolamo Zuliani, Bailo alla Porta Ottamana.—*Antonio Canova, scultore da Possagno.*" Whether from accident or otherwise, there is often in the dedications of these plates, an amusing contradiction between the character or profession of the patron, and the subject represented. Thus, the engraving of the statue of the *arch-tyrant*, Napoleon, is dedicated to the only representative of a *free Republic* now in Europe, the little state of San Marino. The Boxers are presented to a peaceful prelate, the late Cardinal-Secretary Gonsalvi, who might thence be presumed to have been an *amateur* of the *milling art*. Polymnia is inscribed to a Lady, whose name might well frighten

The reputation of Canova was now justly very high, and his professional engagements were multiplied in proportion. Among his earliest patrons, we discover the names of two English noblemen, the one having ordered at this time a Cupid, the other a statue of Psyche, a subject which was afterwards frequently repeated with improvements [1]. These, however, and other less important productions of this period, formed rather the avocations of leisure, than the employments of serious study, which was principally devoted to a work of greater magnificence, and which finally established the name of its author as the greatest of living masters.

Never to be lulled into security by success, nor soothed into inactivity by the renown of past exertions, is a true attribute

even the Muses themselves to pronounce, the Princess *Kaunitz-Reetberg-Weissenwolf*, &c. Vitali died soon after finishing the tomb of Ganganelli; the principal engravers of the other plates are—Bonati,—Balestra,—Bertoni,—Consorti,—Fontana and Marchetti.

[1] Lord Cawdor, who continued a steady and esteemed friend, commissioned the former, and Sir Henry Blundel the latter of these figures.

of intellectual greatness. In generous minds self-complacency has no existence; and the approbation of others acts but as an incentive to renovated efforts. The monument of Clement XIV., therefore, was not yet completely terminated, when Canova commenced another cenotaph, of not inferior magnitude, to the memory of Rezzonico, Clement XII., which the nephews of that pontiff had resolved to erect in St Peter's. This artist, as is observed by an Italian critic, "thus seemed to begin where other sculptors conclude their labours, with such grand and colossal undertakings as are very rarely confided to those whose reputation a long course of years, and a numerous series of works, have not established." But it was not necessary that time should prove the superiority of Canova: his own merits, and the mediocrity of cotemporaries, were at once apparent. He had also, from the commencement, undeviatingly pursued a well-grounded and progressive course of instruction, which enabled him, at an age

when most are still in their noviciate, to present himself to his surprised and delighted countrymen—a bold reformer, yet on judicious and refined principles. Neither from these advantages, however, nor by recent triumph, was he induced to intermit caution, or to lessen application. Nearly five years of diligent study or of laborious industry, were devoted to the present beautiful production. The same careful method, as in the former instance, was employed in modelling the figures; and almost the entire execution was the labour of the artist's own hand. Nothing was trusted to science alone,—a practice apt to lead into conventional modes, but every separate part was faithfully studied from nature,—a fact which will sufficiently appear from one particular. The two Lions in this monument were not finished, till after long and repeated observation on the habits and forms of the living animals. Wherever they were to be seen, Canova constantly visited them, at all hours, and under every variety of cir-

cumstance, that he might mark their natural expression in different states of action and of repose, of ferocity or gentleness. One of the keepers was even paid to bring information, lest any favourable opportunity should pass unimproved.

In 1792 this justly celebrated work was placed in its present situation, in the right lateral nave of St Peter's. The general design resembles the preceding Tomb of Ganganelli. The basement, divided in the centre by a door, is, like the former, composed of two gradations, on which are placed the same number of emblematic figures, with the sarcophagus between; above rises the plinth or pedestal, supporting the kneeling figure of the aged Pontiff. On the left reclines a winged genius of Death, supporting his head on the inverted torch, and fixing a mournful look on the entrance to the tomb; while at his feet, on the first division of the base, reposes a sleeping lion,

——————"*guardando*
A guisa di Leon quando si posa [1]."

[1] Dante Purgatorio, c. vi. p. 64.

To the right, on the second plinth, stands in a firm and erect posture, the personification of Religion, bearing in one hand the cross, while the left arm stretched out, gently rests against the urn. This is solid and plain, having in front an ornamented medallion, within which is inscribed, *Clement. XII.—Rezzonico—P. M.—Fratris Filii.* Under the figure of Religion also couches a Lion—but awake, in attitude of guarding inviolate the approach to the sepulchre, and ready with a tremendous roar to spring upon the intruder,

" Come rugge il Leon, ——— [1].

The statue of the Pontiff being turned, as custom requires, towards the tribune of that majestic temple which it adorns, presents only the profile in front. Bareheaded, the tiara being placed before him, and clothed in a rich sacerdotal stole, which falls around in grand yet simple folds,—with clasped

[1] Tasso. *Right* and *left* of a cenotaph of course imply these positions in relation to the principal figure.

hands, the aged father

———" quivi inchina e riverente,
Abza il pensier sovra ogni ciel sublime [1]."

But though in the general composition of these monuments an affinity may be traced,—no two productions discover more varied, more judicious, or more appropriate invention. Even to the architecture, they maintain a close connection with the character, to perpetuate whose virtues is the object of their erection. Ganganelli, temperate and humble as a simple priest,—energetic, liberal, and enlightened as a secular prince,—is honoured in a tomb, distinguished by elegance and nobleness; while the figures are strictly symbolical of his private excellences. The memory of Rezzonico, estimable chiefly for sincere piety, is preserved by a monument breathing the very spirit of that severe grandeur which becomes religion and sorrow. The grouping in both tends alike to the pyramidal, but in the former it is less marked,

[1] Tasso.

and the eye, with great propriety, is suffered to repose with more definite sensation on each successive figure. In the latter the general arrangement is more sustained, the figures being admirably united by the lions at the base; the whole effect is richer, but the separate parts are less singly prominent. In this, also, superior magnificence was requisite, in accordance with the higher majesty of the site.

It is, however, in the two principal figures, where the skill and judgment of the artist are most conspicuous,—while the contrast which these present eminently manifest the fertility of his imagination. In the statue of Ganganelli, he has boldly rejected the rights of prescription, so long admitted by the imbecility of preceding masters; and, instead of sculpturing the mere features of the individual, devoid of all expression—the limbs without action at the moment of giving the benediction, with a corner of the robe folded over the knees,—he has transferred to the marble the mental energy which characterised the

living Pontiff, who is represented in a noble and imposing attitude of religion and of empire—in act of blessing, of protecting and of governing his people :—

" A sacred influence beams in every look,
As o'er the subject earth, aloft extends
His sacerdotal arm—like one who rules
The things of nature in their secret depths;
Such his aspect in life—when by his word
Aw'd into peace, proud nations ceas'd from hate.
Thus seated 'mid celestial joys serene,
Th' Eternal, high his glorious right-hand rais'd,
When shrunk at his command—rebuk'd—repress'd,
The giant-flood that whelm'd a guilty world;—
Calm'd by a nod, the black'ning tempests clear'd;
Hush'd were the savage winds, and mercy's sign
Spann'd with radiant arch heaven's peaceful vault[1]."

If in one instance advantages in the nature of the subject were thus enjoyed—the

[1] " Dio gli sorride in volto: il labbro spira
Aura celeste, e sul sogetto mondo
La man," &c.

Carme sul deposito di Ganganelli.

Versi sui Marmi di Canova—da Melchior Missirini, p. 20. The original being in " versi sciolti," blank verse, has been retained in the translation.

statue of Rezzonico is the unmingled triumph of genius and of art. Weighed down by years, his form disfigured by obesity and decay, in the actual lineaments, which it was necessary to preserve, were presented neither dignity nor expression; yet such is the unaffected earnestness of manner—so deep the devotional sentiment diffused over the countenance, that the whole figure is invested with a majesty and an interest hardly to be obtained from the highest efforts of the merely ideal and poetical. The whole, but especially the head, were entire novelties in sculpture—without exemplars in antiquity, and equally unprecedented in modern times. "The Pope," says Paravia, "seems really in conference with God, so devout his bearing—so affecting is his seriousness,—even the careless flowing of his pontifical garments mark the soul totally absorbed in thought:" However great or numerous, indeed, the beauties of the subordinate parts, their skilful disposition gently guides the

eye to the principal figure, the excellences of which then fix our regards.

" Rob'd in sacred vestments, there behold
The Sire, whose words the gates of bliss unfold;
Join'd are his hands—his eyes in meekness close,
Kneeling in prayer, his looks on earth repose;—
Yet in those humble looks—those downcast eyes,
We read divine communion with the skies [1]."

Among the loveliest creations of Canova's hand, is the Mourning Genius in this monument. — Never, in the most perfect works of his maturer age, has he excelled the sublimity of conception—dignity of expression —or sweetness of execution, which distinguish this delightful production. The artist has here accomplished the object of his long and painful pupilage, —an object which Michael Angelo either despaired of attaining, or rejected in favour of a more narrowed theory,—namely, the union of a natural and simple style with

[1] " Nel suo gran manto avvolto il sacerdote
Che le porte del ciel chiude e disserre
Con le man giunte," &c.
Versi sul Mon. di Rezzonico da Paolo Casta.

all the exalted grandeur of imaginative and ideal beauty. With the model of this figure the sculptor was himself delighted, and laboured to complete the statue in the most exquisite manner. So anxious was he in this respect, that a dark discoloration in the first block, not discovered till the work had been some time in progress, determined him, at whatever personal loss, to throw it aside. By this sacrifice of interest to fame and principle, the marble alone cost 500 crowns [1].

The personification of Religion is an en-

[1] About 100 guineas. The exchange, during the author's residence at Rome, was 4s. 2d. *per* crown. The care of his own fame was not the sole motive which actuated Canova on this and similar occasions; his principles of action were still more honourable: it was, says his friend Falier, "il disinterresse con che trattò sempre per fine i risultati dell' arte sua." He himself, also, in a letter, where he describes the defects of the marble in question, expresses his resolution to let nothing be wanting, however contrary to his mere pecuniary interest. "Per soddisfare alla sua fama e per far piacere ai suoi mecenati." *Lettera di Canova, Feb.* 20. 1790. This is the statue mentioned in "Corinne" as resembling Oswald.

tirely original creation of the sculptor. Equally removed from the unideal forms of individual reality, as from the no less inappropriate associations of classic invention, it is characterised by a heavenly tranquillity, a sedate gravity and decorum, suitable to the high and mysterious allegory.

" Respect and mingled joy rise in the soul,
As on these sacred lineaments we gaze,
Where lofty majesty and calm control,
Join'd with benignant sweetness, claim our praise:
Eyes meekly bright, pure love inspire; while grace
Ineffable breathes from the virgin face [1]."

This figure, however, is the least pleasing in that noble composition of which it constitutes so conspicuous a part. The desire of retaining an extreme simplicity of attire and of deportment, seems to have cramped the powers of the artist, and to have produced a constraint—a poverty—a want of

[1] " All' alta immago attento,
Sento invadermi il cor gioja e rispetto,
Chi non pur dessa," &c.

Ode sulla Statua della Relig. Missirini, p. 204.

customary elegance, which in the general effect approach to the rigid or even ungracious. The unavoidable position of the statue, which not only exposes it in an unfavourable light, but occasions the throwing an injurious shade over the opposite portion of the monument, doubtless exaggerates these defects [1].

These two monuments employed almost ten years of the most vigorous season of life. These were indeed years of unceasing toil and solicitude, both as the affairs of

[1] Etiquette requires that in the cenotaphs erected in St Peter's, the statues of the Pontiffs be turned towards the tribune, or alleged chair of the Apostle. It was also necessary, in following this practice in the present case, to place the figure of Religion on the right of the kneeling Pope. Unfortunately for this arrangement, the light falls on the monument from a window on the right also; hence the back of the latter figure is turned to the strongest illumination, and not only its front is in obscurity, but a deep shadow is also by this means subtended on the Lion, and beautiful group of the Genius and Sleeping Lion opposite. Cicognara says the effect is very brilliant during the grand illumination of St Peter's:—the Author found it feeble and ineffective.

the artist did not permit of having recourse to the assistance of inferior workmen, and as he meditated technical improvements, and modes of execution unknown to co-temporaries. Much valuable time was thus lost to all the nobler purposes of study, while the conducting from their rude and shapeless state, to their final and exquisite forms such colossal masses, was no less exhausting to the mind than to the body. The method, however, which was now first adopted, and subsequently perfected, not only allowed in future, exclusive attention to the higher provinces of art, but enabled this master to produce a greater number of original works than any other of modern times can boast. This method, at present universally followed, consists, as before stated, in composing models, of exactly the same proportions as the intended statues. But this was not all the improvement. These *models* were finished with the utmost care, and with all the delicacy of which the material is susceptible; from these, *casts* in gypsum or plaster of Paris

were afterwards taken [1]. These latter, preserving the originals from damage, and forming a very near approach to the real marbles, served as guides, by which mere artificers were taught to bring almost to a conclusion the most beautiful productions. Thus in future works, Canova merely gave the finishing touches—those traits of inspiration and of vitality, which no hand but his could impart.

In the Mausolea of Ganganelli and of Rezzonico, the details of execution thus become peculiarly interesting, both as illustrating the genius of Canova in all its bearings, and as exhibiting his superiority

[1] The former by Italian sculptors are termed *Modelli*, or sometimes from the material *Crete*, from *creta*, the name given to the species of clay employed in their formation;—the latter are distinguished by the appellation *Gessi*, from *gesso*, gypsum. These are marked in the requisite places with pencil lines, and frequently brass points are inserted, to which the workman applies his compasses or other instruments employed for taking dimensions; and nothing can be more mechanical than the manner in which the process of manufacturing a block into a statue is conducted.

to every rival, even in that department where alone some traces of ancient excellence still existed. In this respect, then, abstracting the indisputable and high pre-eminence of composition, there cannot be question, that in the graces and force of a facile or bold technicality, these performances maintain an equally proud, though less apparent supremacy. They unite the strength and dexterity of cotemporary works, with a delicacy, elegance and truth altogether their own. As particular examples of powerful management, may be instanced the robes of Ganganelli, the drapery of the two female figures, particularly of Meekness, and the Lions in the Tomb of Rezzonico; while for beauty of finish, the head and arms of Temperance, the countenance and entire torso of the weeping Genius, remain unsurpassed, even by the succeeding labours of their author. The fervour of youth seemed to supply the experience of maturer genius; various parts of both these monuments thus present a combination of painful and dexterous skill,

such as Canova himself has been heard to say he could scarcely hope to excel, and would not easily be induced to repeat. Among the parts thus mentioned were the skin and mane of the two Lions: of these a little anecdote may illustrate the wonderful force and truth. One day while the Author, (a frequent employment,) stood at some distance admiring in different points of view the Tomb of Rezzonico, a woman with a child in her arms advanced to the Lion, which appears to be watching. The terrified infant began to scream violently, clinging to the nurse's bosom, and exclaiming, "*Mordera, mamma, mordera*[1]." The mother turned to the opposite one, which seems asleep; her charge was instantly pacified; and smiling through tears, extended its little arm to stroke the shaggy head, whispering in subdued accents, as if afraid to awake the monster, "*O come placido;—non mordera quello, mamma*[2]."

Dearly, however, was this excellence

[1] "It will bite, mamma, it will bite."

[2] "How gentle!—this one will not bite, mother."

purchased. To the exhausting operations —the unwearied exertions necessary in blocking out, with his own hand, such masses of marble, and in conducting to a conclusion, almost by his single labour, two works of such magnitude, has been ascribed the origin of that disease which ultimately proved fatal to the valuable life of the artist. Alas! that Genius, while aspiring to immortality, should, by too arduous endeavours, so often foster the causes of its own dissolution!

The examination of these monuments, the first grand erections which firmly established the reputation of the sculptor,—which especially illustrate his improvements, his style, and modes of study,—which mark the earliest progress of that splendid reformation finally consummated by his subsequent labours,—which appeared suddenly to elevate the arts from a fallen, degraded, and barbarous state, to vigour, elegance, and truth,—which traced out a new path to future masters, standing as guides to direct, and examples to ani-

mate their endeavours,—has, from these very circumstances, been extended to considerable length. Henceforth details of individual productions must be brief, and selection employed in the subjects. To follow, in every instance, exertions so prolific and indefatigable, would prove an arduous undertaking. The chisel of Canova appeared with greater rapidity to create, than the humble pen of his biographer may aspire to describe; — nor would emulation here be pursued with unabated interest or pleasure. Yet the appearance of his principal works distinguish the most marked occurrences of life. Whatever sensations these produced in the world, whether they provoked censure or excited approbation, (and both indiscriminately accompanied his earlier performances,) Canova, like our own immortal Newton, never himself descended into the arena of contest, or mingled in the field of dispute. When, latterly, opponents arose even in that tract which he had first pursued alone, and when his influence had

shed renewed strength and beauty over prostrate art, his conduct was still the same. From the calm tranquillity—the inviolable retirement of his studio, he seemed to look out in pity on the petty jealousies of lesser minds,—sending forth from time to time such glorious emanations of superlative genius, that criticism was silenced in admiration, and rivalry in despair.

In the works of Canova we are frequently delighted by a certain indefinable charm diffused over, and emanating from them—a something altogether etherial and intellectual which transports the mind, yet mocks the palpable and grosser scrutiny of the senses. This indescribable fascination—this ineffable enchantment seem principally to arise from these productions being generally an embodiment of some elevating conception, or endearing sentiment—not confined to expression, or form, or attitude, but diffused over the whole, and transpiring from every part; so that the effects captivate—raise—refine even those who merely gaze with material eye on the

lovely creation, unable to penetrate the mystery of those higher emotions which they experience. Thus, an agreeable perfume, concealed within a precious vase, sheds a balmy atmosphere around that softly steals over the soul,—while the sight alone appears delighted by the noble shrine in which the latent sweetness is imprisoned.

Among those performances, in which is exhibited this secret, and as it were spiritual character of beauty, the statue of Psyche is especially to be enumerated. Under the form of a young virgin at that interesting age, intermediate between childhood and adolescence, is represented a personification of our immaterial part. But, in this charming composition, following the sublime ideas of Plato, the artist, under an external symbol, has laboured to realize the effects of those exalted and ennobling pleasures which arise from mental pursuits,—to express that internal and independent enjoyment which the soul derives from cultivation and exercise of its own heaven-born faculties. Most successfully has this design been accomplished;

and though at first Psyche, intently occupied with the winged insect in her hand, seems but the sporting of a child—we soon become conscious of a more refined gratification than can be received from gazing on the inanimate lineaments of youth, and beauty, and innocence, however perfect the resemblance.

SONNET.

Hail gentle being—seraph pure and mild!
Thou seem'st, bright image of the human soul,
Life's earliest pledge—when first creation smil'd,
And power eternal bade existence roll.

Sweet modesty adorns thy growing charms;
In nascent orb just heaves thy virgin breast,
Thy downcast glance yet sheds no soft alarms,
But dawning excellence through all is trac'd.

Ah say! whose gracious spirit art thou then,
Who thus resplendent in our nether sphere,
Surpassest in thy beauty Nature's ken?
Yes—thou art his, whose art sublime yet clear,
In thee, by means till now unknown to men,
Has made his better part immortal here [1]!

[1] Psice sola—Sonetto—begimning,
Creatura gentil—Vaga angioletta
Che sei l'immago, &c.
Missirini, No. xxxi.

In the merely technical details,—in the delicacy and justness of the contours,—in the harmony of the proportions,—in the elegance of the drapery, a simple robe of almost transparent texture, this must be ranked among the most faultless and classical of Canova's works,—it wants but the sanction of antiquity to be deemed the genuine labour of the Grecian chisel. Here also we discover one of the earliest, and a very striking example of that exquisite finish, which, amid innumerable other excellences, constitutes so especial a distinction of this master's style. Nor, when its original destination, as the pledge of friendship and of gratitude is considered, need we be surprised, that in this statue the artist should have exerted his utmost skill. Canova had meditated some more substantial proof of grateful feeling than a bare dedication to his kind patron Zuliani; and, accordingly, on that gentleman's return from Constantinople, requested his acceptance of the Psyche now described, which had

been finished with that intent. Zuliani, however, refused to accept as a gift so valuable a marble, and the modest artist remained much hurt by a refusal so unexpected, but well intended. Their mutual friends endeavoured to accommodate the affair, and the architect *Silva* at length reconciled this generous contest. The Ambassador consented to receive the statue, while Canova agreed to accept in return, a number of medals in gold and silver, representing Psyche on one side, with his own head on the other, for the purpose of distributing among such friends and artists as were deemed to merit that distinction. Unfortunately, when the dye for the medal was now completed, and the statue on its way to Venice, Zuliani died. The heirs of that nobleman, irritated by certain clauses in his will, by which all the works of art belonging to the deceased were bequeathed to the public library, refused to ratify the preceding agreement, or to receive the statue in question. Canova, over-

whelmed with grief for the loss of his patron, and moved by this ungenerous conduct, could not bear the idea of ever again beholding a work connected with so many disagreeable recollections, but directed Silva to dispose of it at any price, and to any purchaser. In consequence of this arrangement, this celebrated figure came into the possession of Count *Mangili*; from whom it was subsequently purchased by Napoleon, and by him presented to the Queen of Bavaria, who, as is said, *resta rapita al primo videre questo precioso monumento dell' arte moderna*, was beyond measure delighted with this precious monument of modern art [1].

[1] In a letter to Falier, dated from Rome, 3d April 1795, Canova gives an account of the transaction as related in the text. Many years after, by the death of one of the executors of Zuliani, the dye ordered by that nobleman for the medals to be presented to Canova came into the possession of Silva, who had been the mediator in that business. By this gentleman, a very few impressions in silver and copper were thrown off. From a drawing of one of these, the medal, No. I.

If the equanimity of Canova could have been disturbed by the envious rivalry of inferior artists, this was not the only outrage which his feelings were destined to experience through the medium of this work. Though so generally admired, that Mangili's house was crowded every day with applicants for leave to view it, this universal approbation seemed only the more to exasperate the jealous inferiority of the Venetian artists. One of these, with the design of paying court to a society protected by *imperial* countenance, undertook to prove that the style of art introduced by Canova was altogether erroneous and imbecile. Having made a copy of the Psyche, he contrived to adapt to it a moveable drapery, designed and executed according to those principles of the old school, which were soon fated to linger solely among Academicians, and those

in this work was executed. The head, in which the likeness is carefully preserved, is curious, as a portrait of Canova in youth.

whom age or prejudice rendered incapable of improvement. The copy thus prepared, was exhibited on proper occasions such as the original really was, and the poverty of effect attempted to be pointed out; then the additional drapery being applied, the figure was said to acquire nobleness, and grace, and dignity, &c. The comparison, it was concluded, would overwhelm the rising reputation of Canova. "*Cosa,*" says a writer of that time, "*che non ebbe altro effeto che far vedersi il cattivo gusto degli inventori*[1]."

But *Psiche soletta,* or the widowed Psyche, as this figure is sometimes called, seemed to mourn the absence of her youthful spouse; and in two different groups, and with opposite expression, has the fertile imagination, and delicate hand of the artist,

[1] The contriver of this statue was Toretto, the last master under whom Canova wrought during the early part of his stay in Venice. Canova, in his letter, takes no notice of the circumstance, and afterwards supported by a pension this very artist.

united Cupid with his innocent bride. In the former of these groups the sculptor has followed the fable of Apuleius; in the latter, he has exemplified the sublimer conceptions of Plato; in the one, with invention altogether original, he has represented those youthful and happy beings in such a manner as to touch, *gli confini della voluttà la più dolce*; while in the other, the expression is more tempered, and the delight more placid: In both was dared a perilous confronting with the antique, while numerous difficulties in the subject itself were also to be encountered. In preserving the essential characteristic of simplicity, where so little scope was permitted, there was great danger of becoming tame and insipid, while the nascent forms required profound knowledge, no less than exquisite management, to avoid the opposite errors of the defective and the exaggerated. In all these respects the efforts of the artist have been crowned with the most complete success.

In the former of these celebrated groups,

the moment of representation has been chosen, when Psyche recovers from the insensibility caused by the pestiferous vapour included within the fatal urn, which, with curiosity natural to her sex, she had imprudently opened. In a half recumbent posture, Love fondly bends over the prostrate nymph, one arm encircling her beautiful bosom, and the other supporting her languishing head; while she, with answering caresses, and both hands raised to his head, gently draws the face downwards to meet her own:

" Stretched on the ground the Virgin Psyche lies,
Like some fair rose torn from its stem away,
Within whose damask bosom ere it dies,
Freshness a while yet triumphs o'er decay;
But Love, with odours from his mother's breast,
And life diffusing from his native skies,
Dispels the vapours that her sense oppress'd;—
She breathes, she lives, she opes her languid eyes,
And finds within his arms her wonted place of rest[1] !"

[1] Imitation of some lines by Messirini, beginning
" Giacea sal masso la Virgin leggiadra
Come recisa rosa," &c.
Amore e Psiche, p. 133.

The sculptor regarded this work with considerable complacency, but he entertained some apprehensions—groundless, certainly, from the delicacy with which the subject is treated, lest the general expression might be deemed too full of melting sensibility;—an opinion that without doubt aided in suggesting the second group, and which may probably have been strengthened by such anecdotes as the following. One day, while some friends were loud in their commendations of this piece, a lady of high rank, and a great patroness of the arts, happening to be present, who, by the bye, was fully as remarkable for prudery as for real modesty, ventured "*con molte scuse*," to object "*che il sentimento era un po' troppo vivo*,"—"to the sentiment, as being a little too warm." "*Bene, Signora*," replied the sculptor, "*bisogna temp'rare il foco di questi giovanetti*,"—"we must moderate the ardour of these youngsters." Canova was then meditating his second group; but before the model was

completed, the fair, and, as alleged, frail critic, was obliged to undertake a sudden journey to Florence, — which scandal affirmed to be under very peculiar circumstances. Such suspicions, the languid appearance of the traveller on her return did not tend to dispel. The new work quite charmed her,—more especially as it was flatteringly ascribed to her previous remarks. " The whole effect," she declared, " was admirable, *ma l'atto tenero, il movimento languente di Psyche*;—but above all, the tender expression, the *languishing* attitude of Psyche." " *Oh*," interrupted the witty but satirical Abbate M——a, " *E stata forse mandata a Firenza*;—" perhaps, Madam, Psyche has been at Florence."

This group, distinguished by the adjunct " *in piede*," the former being called *giacente*, is justly designated as being " *cosi soave che non rimane al censore più rigido qual desiderio di maggior perfezione*;"—" so delightful, that the most rigid critic can hard-

ly desire greater perfection." In this figure of Psyche, the artist has imitated himself, it being almost a repetition of his former work, in which the nymph is represented alone; while, if there be degrees of beauty where both are so lovely, it is inferior to the companion with which it is now united. Though resembling in the general design the famous antique of the Capitol, the present performance differs in the conception of character—in expression, and in action. Psyche gently places the insect symbol on the right hand of the son of Venus, who with his left encircling her neck, tenderly reclines his head on her shoulder. In the calm and pure affection, —the almost celestial sweetness which beam in both the faultless countenances, we penetrate those lofty mysteries which the noblest of heathen philosophers has wrapped up in his chaste acceptation of this ancient allegory. The ideas which, from his own confession, it is known the

sculptor wished to convey, in addition to the mere portraiture of youthful beauty—the divine origin of the human soul—and the ennobling effects of virtuous love, are well expressed by the poet already quoted.

" To Sense, a weak misguiding light,
Remains unknown this mystic rite;—
But those on whom the Muse hath shed
The lore, by which the wise are led,
The truths divine behold reveal'd,
Under these radiant forms conceal'd.

Spark of celestial purity,
Effusion bright of Deity,—
Primeval birth of Nature's womb,—
Conqueror of the dreary tomb,—
Essence mocking all decay,
That animat'st our mortal clay,
Whence but from Love first beam'd thy vital ray!

All-powerful Love! thy gladness cheers
The dark abyss and shining spheres;—
Thou with the godhead view'dst sublime
The noiseless march of eldest Time,
When first the stars together sung,
And Beauty from dull Chaos sprung;

By thee was chas'd profane Desire,
While genial flames the breast inspire—
The sympathies of husband—child—and sire [1]."

By these and other proofs of the loftiest genius, the reputation of Canova was now elevated so high, and his name extended so far, that the most flattering invitations were received from the Russian court, pressing his removal to St Petersburgh. These advantageous offers of imperial patronage were, however, declined. "Italy," says he, writing on this occurrence to a friend, "Italy is my country—is the country and native soil of the arts;—I cannot leave it;—my infancy was nurtured here;—and if my poor talents can be useful in any other, they must be of some utility to this; and ought not hers to be preferred to all other claims?" With equal mode-

[1] Imitation of Stanzas vii. to xii. inclusive, of "*Ode al Gruppo di Amore e Psiche, secondo le idee di Platone,* commencing

"Il vulgo intanto di follie nudrito,
Che oltre i sensi ingannevoli," &c.

Missirini, p. 105.

ration, the artist again declined the renewed solicitations of the same court, that he would undertake a journey to St Petersburgh, in order to make the necessary studies for a colossal statue of the sovereign, which it was intended he should sculpture. A commission previously accepted from the Venetian Senate, was the ostensible cause of respectfully refusing this proffered honour. He wished to devote undivided attention to the commands of his early patron, and was anxious, by the perfection of the work, to evince that their well-timed munificence had not been misplaced [1]. There was, besides, a secret reluctance to engage in an undertaking attended with many difficulties, great loss of time, and which, from the remoteness of its final destination, could tend little to promote the reputation of its author in the nearer and more refined portion of Europe.

The commission above alluded to—the

[1] Letters of Canova, dated November 22. and December 20. 1794. — Private Correspondence of the Author, &c. Falier, &c.

first which for a long lapse of years had been given by a body, once such generous protectors of the arts, was a monument to be raised by the Senate and People of Venice to the memory of the latest of her warriors—the last Commander of her last fleet—the Admiral *Emo*,—a man whose heroism must still live in the recollection of many readers,—who, at a season of public calamity, wrote these memorable words to the representatives of the state: "Permit, I entreat of you, Conscript Fathers, that my whole patrimony may be applied towards restoring the melancholy disaster which the republic has this day sustained [1]."

On this occasion Canova produced a work worthy of recording such virtue—worthy of a grateful country—worthy of himself. The cenotaph is an alto relievo, with figures of the natural size. Elevated on a rostrated column, the base of which

[1] The loss of great part of a Venatian fleet by a tempest, opposite the coast of Eleos.

Gazzetta di Venezia.

is washed by the waves, is the bust of the deceased, a most striking and characteristic likeness; on this noble head the Genius of Venice descends to place that crown so justly merited by his actions; while Fame, kneeling on one of the floating batteries invented by the Admiral, and here judiciously introduced, is inscribing his name on the front of the pedestal with a pen of gold. With this beautiful composition the Senate shewed entire satisfaction; and as a lasting mark of approbation, a gold medal, of the value of 100 sequins, was struck, bearing on the obverse a representation of the monument, and on the reverse the following laudatory inscription: "*Antonio Canovæ, Veneto, artibus elegantioribus mirifici instructo, ob monumentum publicum Angelo Emo egregie insculptum, Senatûs munus, a.* M.DCCXCIV[1]." Nor was

[1] See Engravings of Medals, No. 2. "The reward of the Senate to Antonio Canova, native of Venice, a most skilful master in the fine arts, for his admirable execution of the public monument to the memory of Angelo Emo, anno 1794."

this honour the sole proof of the estimation in which the talents of the artist were held by his fellow-citizens. It was at the same time farther decreed, that he should receive from the revenue of the state a *vitalizia* or annuity for life, "*mensuale corrisponsione netta da qualunque aggravio di ducati* 100 *valuta corrente—in retribuzione del monumento dell' Ammiraglio Emo.*" The payment of this small donative, indeed, from the succeeding troubles of the republic, was soon after intermitted, while the rapidly advancing fortunes of the artist rendered such aid unnecessary. As a mark of mutual esteem, however, it was not less honourable either to those who conferred, or to him who received this evidence of public favour.

Numerous labours, the fruits of that indefatigable industry, which, from the commencement, peculiarly distinguished, as it materially aided the progress of Canova, during the years 1795-6-7, followed in rapid succession. Of these, several being merely repetitions of productions already

described, while others will properly fall hereafter to be examined, it is only necessary briefly to notice the celebrated group representing the parting of Venus and Adonis. The youth is gazing tenderly on the goddess, with his left arm encircling her waist, and grasping in his right hand a hunting spear; while she, by the most endearing yet chaste caresses, endeavours to avert his resolution of departing [1]. Though modelled at a former period, when the artist was employed on the monument of Rezzonico, the marble did not receive the full impress of his powers, till longer study had matured his conceptions of beauty and of sentiment. Accordingly, there is to be observed in this performance that elevation above her individual modifications, which exhibits the most intimate and exalted perceptions of nature,—which

[1] Many observations have been made respecting the coldness of expression in the countenance of Adonis. Those who make this objection would do well to recollect the remark of an Italian critic, that the lover is going out to, not returning from the chase.

constitutes the true object of sublime art. Those excellences, of which gradual unfolding may be traced throughout the whole course of earlier exertions, have here attained decided development; and we trace full possession of the firm, sustained, and ideal style that distinguishes the masters of antiquity.

On the first arrival of this charming group in Naples, where it long occupied a genial site on the shores of "the wondrous bay[1]," — the king went to see it, and out of respect to the artist, every tax imposed by existing regulations was remitted; his Majesty declaring that this distinction was merited, "*come fu opera di nuovo insigne ornamento alla capitale, e di perfetto modello agli alunni delle belle arti;*" — "the work being calculated to add a new and conspicuous ornament to the capital, and to prove a perfect model to students of the fine arts." As a more ample proof of

[1] The original purchaser of this work was the Marchese di Berio, who erected a beautiful temple for its reception; twenty-seven years afterwards it became the property of M. Favre of Geneva.

royal approbation, the sculptor was on this occasion decorated with the insignia of the order of the two Sicilies,—an honour introductory to numerous others of a similar or higher rank.

Genius is rarely the friend of political revolution. Occupied in its own lofty and refined pursuits,—elevated above the mists and obscurities—the passions and prejudices which involve the inferior regions of the intellectual world, and form the master-springs of action in those restless spirits whose egotism at least equals their talents, it exists as in a pure and tranquil clime, surrounded by the beautiful creations or noble discoveries of its own agency. That order of things which secures the peaceful enjoyment of favourite avocations, is thus naturally cherished.

"Volva sua spera, e beato si gode [1]."

The revolutionary frenzy then, which at the close of the eighteenth century overspread Europe, excited no sympathy in the

[1] Dante, Inferno, Canto vii. 96.

breast of Canova, but on the contrary filled his mind with consternation. Even before its insidious workings had yet betrayed themselves in the atrocities which marked its advances, he had from its commencement expressed abhorrence of the system. "He wrote not a single letter to me from Rome," says Falier, and their correspondence during that space was uninterrupted, "throughout the whole course of 1797, up to the 12th of May 1798, in which deep affliction for the troubles and disposition of the times is not expressed." In fine, no longer able to endure those scenes of anarchy, of crime, and of violence which were daily presented in that city, and last of all the outrages committed on the liberty of the Pontiff, the artist abandoned his numerous works—his extensive studios—and his rapidly increasing reputation, retiring to mourn these disorders in the peaceful, because unnoticed obscurity of his native Possagno. What changes had occurred in his life and prospects since last these solitudes were trodden by him,

an ardent — enthusiastic — yet poor and nameless youth, the destined successor of the hereditary stone-cutter in this neglected village! The same individual now returned to the scenes of boyhood, cherished by nobles—rewarded by senates—honoured by princes—but above all, distinguished as one of those rare and highly gifted beings whose existence designates an epoch in the mental records of the species. Of these distinctions their possessor seemed unconscious,—at least to his early associates Canova presented the same unassuming modesty—the same mild benevolence that had characterized "*il giovine Antonio*," the young Antonio, when formerly a resident among them—with views and hopes similar to their own.

In this retirement from the middle of 1798, our artist remained somewhat more than a year. By one who "lived solely in his art," it will not be supposed that this interval passed unimproved, or unmarked by advancement in those exercises which were chiefly congenial to his mind.

Painting, in which, under Mingardi, as already mentioned, he had early made progress, and for which the intimate friendship of Hamilton [1] had latterly cherished his prepossessions, as well as improved his taste, occupied during this period of retreat undivided attention. This may be deemed, then, the proper place to introduce a short review of Canova's principal labours in the sister art; whence it will appear how far we are to credit the assertions so boldly urged, that as a painter he was totally unsuccessful. The earliest production of his pencil, which here merits attention, is a picture of a sleeping Adonis, stretched on a rich couch, "*in atto dolcissimo di dormire*," which was finished soon after the group of Theseus and the Minotaur. In 1792 he painted that beautiful Venus, which remained so long unacknowledged by the ingenious artist, and whose tints, as witnessed by Tadini, caused it to

[1] "L'amicizia stretissima ch' ebbe con l'Hamilton, gliene accrebbe il genio al trasporto,"—speaking of painting. Falier—Letter of Canova, 10th Nov. 1792.

be regarded *come di mano del Tiziano*[1]." This resemblance, which deceived even the most practised observers, was still farther aided by an ingenious artifice. In the ornaments and accessories, which seemed to have been carefully re-touched by some more recent hand, slight cracks and other effects of time were skilfully imitated. Another Venus reposing, and surprised by a Faun, has also great beauty of form united to splendid colouring. The broad and masterly style of *Giorgione* was also a peculiar favourite with our sculptor; and in one instance, he so closely imitated this manner, that having executed the piece in private, it passed for more than a year as an original of Giorgione, till its real author voluntarily disclosed the secret. In the same *gusto* there are also several other performances extant, such as the heads of a warrior, and of an old man, as also his own likeness, *in mezzo busto*,

[1] Le Sculture, e le Pitture di Antonio Canova. This pleasing work, in prose and verse, describes those works executed before 1796.

dressed in black *alla francese*, with many other minor works, to enumerate which, would be irrelevant here[1]. It may however be requisite to give a more detailed account of the *capo-lavoro* of Canova in this department of art. This picture, in which the figures are of the natural size, represents the dead body of the Saviour just removed from the cross, lying pale and discoloured on a bed, surrounded by the three Marys, the beloved disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, and rather in the back ground, Nicodemus. These all lament the same catastrophe, are occupied with the same mournful object, but each in a different attitude, and with appropriate expression. Above this admirable composition, which thus combines unity of action with variety of effect, appears

[1] Such is the portrait of his own Mother—that of the Abbate Tonello of Treviso—a Magdalen for Count Roberti. The Counsellor Aglietti, and the Count Algarotti of Venice, are also in possession of many paintings and original designs of Canova. Cicognara states the number of his paintings to be twenty-two. They are certainly more numerous.

the personification of the Eternal Father, with the mystic Dove, in the centre of a celestial glory, and surrounded by a circle of Cherubs. This painting, which on its first appearance excited very general admiration [1], was the first tribute of the artist's benevolence to the Parochial Church of Possagno, where it was placed on the 4th of May 1800. However valuable the present now described, it merely formed the earliest instance of that generous munificence, which, as we shall afterwards see, converted this humble edifice into a splendid temple.

These notices, which might have been much more extended, sufficiently establish the object in view; and while they are necessarily introduced as illustrative of his

[1] For descriptions of this picture, and accounts of the effects which its beauties produced on the public, see Mem. dell Ateneo di Treviso, tom. iii. (Cicognara) Giornale sulle Science e Lettere delle provincie Venete (Albrizzi). Ibid. No. 7, (Paravia). Viaggio Pittorico per la provincia Triviciana. Canova retouched this painting in 1821: its height is 28 palms,—about 20 feet.

life and habits, the facts prove that Canova, cultivating the art more as an accomplishment, than with serious intentions of excelling, was therefore not a great painter, only because he ranks among the first of sculptors.—This temporary, but not indolent obscurity having passed away, affairs in the Holy See assuming a more settled aspect, we return with our artist to Rome; where a still more brilliant career than that hitherto traced, awaited his now matured genius. But as his health had suffered severely from continued application, he resolved, in the first instance, to embrace an opportunity now presented, of making a tour, during a few months, through part of Germany: Accordingly, in company with the Prince Rezzonico, he visited first Vienna, and afterwards Berlin. This journey proved highly beneficial, and enabled him with renewed vigour to recommence his labours.

CHAPTER VII.

Full establishment of Canova's reputation—General classification of his works—Anecdotes and description of the principal statues of the first class—Perseus—Napoleon—Boxers—Hercules and Lychas, &c.—Remarks on the chief groups and figures of the second class—Venus—the Graces—the sitting Figures, &c.—Monuments composing the third class—of Maria Christina—of Alfieri—Cenotaphs, &c.—Bassi Relievi—Reflections on the studies of Canova.

In preceding chapters, it has been the great object of endeavour to exhibit in complete development circumstances and events best calculated to unfold the powers, illustrate the character, or explain the modes of study which peculiarly distinguished the individual. With intentions thus directed to render an exclusive biography generally useful as well as interesting, the path of Canova's life has now been closely followed, from the first dawnings of intellectual vigour to the full ma-

turity of mental strength. The latter era commences with the opening of the nineteenth century; and from this period is to be dated the establishment of Canova on that throne, till then vacant since the death of Michael Angelo. With this epoch, also, begins an uninterrupted series of the most splendid labours maintaining this supremacy, and constituting the leading occurrences of more than twenty years, passed in unceasing but not eventful activity.

To describe in detail each of these productions, for reasons already urged, would be impracticable here; it may even be questioned how far such isolated relations would tend to afford just conceptions of the characteristic properties of his style of art, or enable to trace with fidelity the master features in the genius of the artist. These objects will be best accomplished, and even a more distinct knowledge of the works attained, by arranging the latter under separate classes. In pursuing this method, slight deviations only need be made from the chronological order; while under

each division will be introduced such subjects as seem, from their intrinsic importance, or from the anecdotes connected with them, best adapted to attain the ends in view.

The sculptures of Canova, then, may be distributed into three distinct orders;

I. Heroic compositions.

II. Compositions of grace and elegance.

III. Sepulchral monuments, and relievos.

The first and second of these divisions will be found, in some instances, to graduate into each other,—yet the distinction is sufficiently accurate for the purposes of simple arrangement. The third class is composed of two apparently separate species; but the description of monumental erections, the greater proportion of which is in that style, naturally leads to the mention of relievos in general.

I. Rome still mourned her naked galleries and plundered museums, from which the statues of antiquity, with other treasures of art, had been borne away, leaving to

Italians, says one of their historians, " *il lutto della privazione, e la vergogna di non averle defesi,*" " the grief of privation, and the shame of not having defended them." In this state of affairs, almost immediately after the return of the sculptor from his short and voluntary banishment, appeared the Perseus of Canova: " A work," continues the author just quoted, " which convinced the world, that though the Italians might be despoiled of life and substance, though those monuments which adorned it might be torn from the soil, the taste for the fine arts inherent there, and the only resource of the unhappy country, could not be destroyed." This statue, the first in the purely heroic style attempted by the artist, was originally sculptured for Bossi, a celebrated painter and professor of Milan [1]. So remarkable, however,

[1] Giuseppe Bossi was equally distinguished in literature and in the arts. From a defect of vision, his colouring was too red; but his style of design is noble and correct. He studied carefully every excellence which remained of former masters, in marble, in me-

were the grandeur and beauty of this truly classical production, that the Papal government forbade its removal from their capital; and though the finances of a state once so rich, were in such a dilapidated condition, that there was now some difficulty experienced in paying for a work of art the price already given by an individual, yet the Sacred College determined on the purchase. These prior claims were conceded; and the Perseus, by a *public decree*, was placed in one of the *stanze* of the Vatican, hitherto exclusively reserved for the most precious works of antiquity. How much Rome rejoiced in this acquisition sufficiently appears from the publications of the time. The mournful looks directed to the vacant pedestal of the Apollo, brightened with proud consciousness as they rested on the not unworthy successor

tal, or in painting, with which to enrich his discoveries and to instruct youth. In the latter he was most eminently successful. His writings on the biography of native arts are much esteemed. Bossi, Appiain, and a few other eminent artists, added splendour to the short-lived glory of the Cisalpine republic.

of that noblest effort of Grecian genius. Hence, among those *buoni Italiani*, who judged from merit, unbiassed by envy or prejudice, the Perseus was generally distinguished under the appellation of *il consolatore*, or the "consoler."

In this work the moment of representation has been selected when the hero, in sign of victory, triumphantly displays the frightful head of the "snaky Gorgon," while the right hand still grasps a sword of singular device, the instrument of conquest. On the head is an helmet bearing some resemblance to a Phrygian cap, while rich sandals cover the feet; in other respects the form is entirely naked, with the exception of loose drapery, which falling from the left arm, flows behind to the ground, serving as a support, and adding effect to the figure, as well as removing the harshness that would be produced by a naked arm extended at nearly right angles with the body. To these accessories many objections were made, the casque and sword being deemed of a shape not warranted by

classical authority. To these criticisms Canova, as usual, made no reply; but the following explanation, written by himself, was suspended in his studio, where this statue was first exhibited to the public; a notice which completely silenced every detractor, and is not less honourable to the author's knowledge of antiquity, than to the careful research employed to preserve fidelity in even the most minute details [1].

"Perseo filio di Giove e di Danaë venendo spedito dal Re Polidite contro le Gorgone, vuolsi che recivesse da Mercurio, il quale particolarmente lo amava, i talari e le ali, ch' egli poi mise sopra quest' elmo dato gli da Plutone, si prodigioso che rendeva invincible chiunque lo portava. Quest' elmo da parecchi autori vien fatto simile al beretto Frigio, con due orecchie; e tale punto osservasi in una Pallade, (ch' esiste-

[1] When in the journals of travellers we are still favoured with similar objections, we must certainly admire the ingenuity of those who contrive to write on subjects with which they prove themselves to be so little acquainted.

va nel gabinetto del Card. Gualtieri) perche anche la dea volle servirne in parecchie occasioni. Da Vulcano pretendesi ancora che avesse una falce di diamante, colla quale egli potesse recidere il capo alla Gorgone Medusa. La forma di quest' arma a punta ed uncino incontrasi in varii monumenti; ed Omero ed altri autori l'appellano propriamente *arpe:* dal qual termine spiegar volendo la forza. Suida gli approprio il nome Greco *Loncodrepano*, che vale a dire coltello-puntato-falcato [1]." C.—

[1] The substance of the above advertisement may be thus rendered: Perseus having engaged to bring the heart of Medusa, (the only one of the Gorgon sisters who was mortal,) to King Polydectus, received wings from Mercury which he fitted to the helmet given him by Pluto. This helmet, as appears from several authors, was in shape like a Phrygian cap, with two ears; and, in fact, is to be seen of that form on a Minerva, in the collection of Card. *Gualtieri*, the godde s hav ng made use of the same on different occasions. From Vulcan the hero also received a sword of diamond; this weapon, with a point and hook, (on one edge,) is to be met with on various monuments. Homer and other authors call it *harpe*, a term implying force.

That the government of a country where his talents alone had naturalized him, should publicly interpose to prevent the exportation of his works,—that even in a time of general distress, it should repay the stipulated price,—that by a sovereign decree this valued performance should be pronounced worthy of an asylum hitherto denied to modern art, must have furnished matter of proud triumph to Canova. These were honours surpassed only by the renown of Glycon and of Praxiteles, of Scophas or of Phidias, when Kings and Republics strove for the glory of purchasing a single statue. At the same time, this success, however justly merited, which at the age of forty-three exalted him above all competitors, tended still more to exasperate the hostility of rivals and of enemies. Accordingly, while the general approbation, not to say enthusiasm excited by this production, almost equalled a sentence of posterity

Suidas names it, from the Greek, *Loncodrepanon*, that is to say, *a dagger pointed and hooked.*

in its favour; in the various dissertations which its appearance called forth, this work has been more frequently selected as a subject of censure than of praise. To the objections of prejudice—that it was a species of profanation to place the labours of a living master on a level with those of the ancients, the remark of the artist to his private friends affords the best reply: "It has been thought proper, by those who have a right to dispose of it as they may, that the Perseus should be removed to the Vatican;—for me to have interfered in this matter, would have displayed scarcely less arrogance, than if I had insisted on its occupying the deserted pedestal of the Apollo." The spirit of much professional criticism, however, is more judicious, as also less easily obviated. The beauty and perfection of the forms, considered without reference to the higher aims of art, were universally allowed; but it has been urged, that, in originality of invention, as in unity of character, there were great deficiencies. The design of the Perseus is

obviously copied from that of the Apollo, nay the dissimilarity of action is evidently studied, as if with the intention of obtaining diversity, or of concealing imitation. Again, in respect to propriety of character, this statue, it was said, presented the irreconcilable union of a divinity and of a hero, as they are realized in the works of ancient masters; and that it must be regarded "*un Apollo coi tratti di un guerriero*," as an Apollo with the traits of a warrior. Of this latter objection, the practice of antiquity itself perhaps supplies the best refutation; since in compositions of antique sculpture, a similar combination of soft or almost luxurious beauty, with an expression and action of athletic vigour, may frequently be remarked [1]. But while criti-

[1] As in the statues of Bacchus, and even in those of Apollo; "for why," as has been judiciously asked, "may not a *Perseus* and an Apollo in similar modes of action resemble?"—"Perche Apollo saettatore del serpente, e *Perseo* vincitore della Gorgone, non possono aver lo stesso carattere." In the Museum of the capital also is a *basso relievo* of a Perseus the size of nature, which might easily be mistaken for an Apollo.

cism was thus estimating the work by abstract precepts of excellence, the more practical science of the artist detected irregularities overlooked by theory. In a long course of observation, Canova had himself discovered various defects in the muscles and divisions of the abdomen, which once more applying the chisel to the marble, he rectified only a few years previous to his decease.

The colossal statue of *Napoleon*, though, as regards the countenance, the portrait of an individual, strictly belongs to the heroic and ideal class. Like the ancient masters of the world, the former Ruler of France and of Italy is represented naked, the military *clamys* being merely pendant from his left arm. This is elevated above the head in a graceful curve, the hand grasping a long sceptre, while the right supports a globe surmounted by a winged victory—the symbol of empire, as borne by the Olympian Jupiter of Phidias. "Napoleon," remarks an Italian writer, "thus sculptured by Canova, was presented to the British

Government by the French King; it was curious to see the statue of that formidable man, who, to the moment when he ceased to reign, had kept these two renowned and powerful nations in open war, thus become a pledge of mutual concord, solely because the work of the first artist of the age[1]." The idea of the action seems to have been derived from an antique in the Florentine gallery, with this difference, that in the latter the movement is completed, whereas the very act of advancing is here represented—the left foot being raised, the right firmly planted, and the body not yet fully thrown forward, gravitating equally on both. An unfinished action is frequent in the works of this master, and in

[1] Paravia. This statue was subsequently presented by Government to the Duke of Wellington, in whose house in Piccadilly it now stands—*below a stair*, where it not only cannot be seen to any advantage, but where it is exposed to all manner of accidents. This note may enlighten the ignorance of Sig. P. A. Paravia, who with great *naiveté* confesses, "Come Londra fu lieta per l'acquista di si stupenda statua non so dire." London knew little about the matter.

the present instance produces a most lively effect: we almost expect to behold the anticipated motion of the majestic form. The whole composition indeed presents a series of excellences in the minor elegances of detail, no less than in the highest and noblest beauties of art. In the countenance, which once bore a strong resemblance to the living original, little of imaginative elevation being added, we trace the lineaments of one who belongs not to the ordinary race of men [1]; while the looks fixed on the emblem of dominion well accord with the animated attitude.

"Why on the mimic orb grasp'd in thy hand,
Still dwell thy stern regards?—seek'st thou a land
Through thy ambition not yet drench'd in blood,
Or stream—or sea with unpolluted flood?
Thy eagle-banner long by war unfurl'd
Triumphant floats o'er more than half the world;
Shall then a future age, alien to peace,
Pray—vainly pray to see thy conquests cease?
No—unequal to thy greatness, thou shalt fall
Vanquish'd, and exil'd, and bereft of all;

[1] Bonaparte by obesity soon lost the noble traits of countenance which will live in Canova's statue.

From violated rights disaster springs,
Their people's love secures the throne of Kings [1]."

Though this statue was not finished till six years after, the bust was carefully modelled from the life in 1802-3; Canova, at the personal request of the First Consul, undertaking a journey to Paris for that purpose. On this occasion, during his whole stay in that capital, he was entertained with munificence, and various honours conferred upon him. Nor was this all; the selfish but dazzling ambition of Napoleon meditated an empire over the minds, no less than over the liberties of men, and he wished to adorn, or to conceal his reign by the splendours of art, and the refinements of science. In the sculptor of Possagno, he beheld one pre-eminently qualified to forward these designs; no means,

[1] Ma a che sull'orbe, onde la mano hai grave
Fisi lo sguardo? Forse cerchi arène
Non violate, &c.

Carme alla Statua di Napoleone.
XIV. of Missirini, p. 111, &c.

therefore, were left unemployed to induce the accomplished artist to exchange the shores of the Tiber for the banks of the Seine. But the most flattering distinctions, the most splendid prospects, and promises renewed even at a subsequent period, were alike unavailing; Canova remained faithful to Italy and to his own sovereign, the late Pius VII., who early in his Pontificate, even before that exile, so disgraceful to the French ruler, had begun to honour him with distinguished friendship. The Consul, however, had the generosity to overlook this determined refusal; and the recusant was dismissed loaded with favours. Canova had little ambition beyond his own art. A residence in Paris could give nothing in this respect which Rome could not afford; while the opposition which he foresaw must be encountered in the former, where the fame and interests of a stranger would generally be withstood, doubtless exerted considerable influence in the rejection of these offers. He also disliked the taste of that nation as regards the fine arts.

"They are not inspired," he used to say, speaking of the French, and to confidential friends, "with genuine love of art: it is merely a love of display. In the composition of his piece, the artist is more solicitous to exhibit his own talents than to represent simple truth;—in purchasing it, the patron is equally desirous of displaying himself. Even their national gallery is display, where the noblest works are prized, not as triumphs of genius, but as trophies of conquest [1]."

Various and highly interesting conversations were maintained between Napoleon and Canova, during the abode of the latter in Paris. The substance of these dialogues, so full of interest from the celebrity of the speakers, is still preserved, having been noted at the time by the step-brother of the artist, by whom he was constantly attended. Buonaparte, himself a man of consummate abilities, delighted in the converse of men of genius, to whose frankness

[1] Falier—Paravia—Cicognara—Federici—Letters of Canova—Private correspondence of the author, &c.

and independence he permitted liberties of speech unpardonable in any of his mere courtiers. Our ingenuous artist was not one to suffer the privilege of fearlessly declaring the truth, or of pleading the cause of the oppressed, to remain unclaimed. A lover of peace from humanity of disposition, while he possessed the almost universal temperament of high intellect—an attachment to liberty, he seized every opportunity of appealing in favour of both; more especially he insisted, with amiable enthusiasm, on the past glory of Italy, and on the expediency—the justice of restoring her to independence. In such political conversations, we must admire the prudence and sagacity conspicuous in his conduct. These were always introduced by Napoleon, Canova seeming merely to allow his replies to be elicited; for he possessed too much good sense to obtrude his opinion in matters of which, from previous habits and pursuits, the extent of his knowledge might be questioned. Unwelcome truths thus came with greater propriety

from one who had no interest to forward—no vanity to gratify in declaring them, and acquired additional weight as they were in part unexpected. His auditor, struck by the novelty or veracity of some remark, would often stop him for some moments, then motion to proceed, muttering, half aside, "*Buono, buonissimo, non siete solamente scultore;*"—"Good, very good, that is not the saying of a mere sculptor." It was not, however, always with calmness that Buonaparte at such times listened to observations which went near to implicate the integrity of his actions, or the humanity of his views. "*Come!*" "how!" he would exclaim, "Citizen Canova, *parlate senza tema,*"—"you speak without fear:"—"*Parlo da uom sincero,*"—"I speak without flattery," was the laconic and unperturbed reply. These conversations chiefly took place while the Consul sat for his bust. On one of these occasions the first sketch of the intended statue was shewn to him; not seeing in this design any arms among the accessories, "How is this," said he,

playfully addressing the artist, " Citizen Canova, there must be a plot against me,—you have left me without defence."—" No, Sire," replied the sculptor, pointing out the parazonium suspended on the trunk which supports the figure, " I have only hung up the sheathed sword, in sign of that peace, to which the wishes of all good men have long inclined."

Buonaparte was distinguished above most men by felicity in discerning the peculiar talents of others, and by address in eliciting from their acquirements useful intelligence. With a great artist, therefore, he would not, as may be supposed, constantly talk of politics. The best modes of embellishing the capital—the measures most effective in promoting the fine arts—the proper arrangement of a national gallery, formed the frequent subject of their discourse. On all of these points Canova was capable of giving new and valuable information, and on each he freely communicated his thoughts; the last, indeed, often

led to animated expression of feeling. Too zealous for the honour of his country, as also too ardent an admirer of antiquity, not to lament the removal of those wonders of art which had so long adorned the clime and inspired the genius of Italy,—he was too ingenuous to conceal his indignant sentiments, even from the man whose power had sanctioned that outrage. Thus, by the particular desire of Napoleon, he examined the *Musée* of the Louvre, for the purpose of ascertaining what improvements could be effected in the disposition of those *chef-d'œuvres*, which had recently been transported from their former sites to that superb collection. Being then asked by the Consul, "Whether they were not judiciously arranged," he answered with admirable brevity, "*certo stavano meglio in Italia*," — "they certainly were better placed in Italy."

In France, under the revolutionary and imperial systems, the causes which influenced the fate of the arts seem to have been altogether political,—or even originating

in the desire of personal aggrandisement, than springing from the primary objects of national advantage, and the general improvements of taste. Whether as Consul or Emperor, the founder of the late dynasty encouraged painting, sculpture, and also architecture, as means of throwing around his administration a splendour which dazzled the minds of beholders, and prevented a too close inspection of their own condition. Canova used to represent him as possessing little original refinement, and not much acquired knowledge in the arts. But his designs connected with these were traced on the same magnificent scale which distinguished all his operations; while in carrying these plans into effect, he selected with acute and unbiassed judgment the most enlightened conductors. With their determination as regarded the details he never interfered. They were subsequently left to the free exercise of their skill, with the comprehensive mandate, "*Faire le meilleur, et à la manière la plus grande.*" Of Josephine, on the contrary, our artist

spoke with deference, and even in a manner approaching to the affectionate. He described her as endowed with great delicacy of taste,—as one delighting from inclination in the beautiful and the elegant, and whose decisions on these qualities, derived from native discernment, were rarely erroneous. As a proof of this, it may be remarked, that many of the most graceful of this sculptor's productions,—the two groups of Cupid and Psyche—the Paris—the Graces, &c., were either originally commissioned, or subsequently obtained by Josephine.—The statues of Paris and of Palamedes present the same elevated style, with an expression of greater repose than either of the preceding. The former is regarded as one of the most perfect works of the artist, combining the simplicity of nature with the grandeur of the ideal. Standing in an easy and graceful attitude—his looks attentively bent on some object near, the Shepherd of Ida seems still to gaze undecided on the beauties of the rival divinities. The fatal apple, yet unappro-

priated, is held in the right hand, while the left is raised to the head, the arm resting against a trunk, on which is suspended a drapery elegantly disposed, as if just laid aside. This statue was sent to France in 1813, on which occasion, one of the most competent judges in that capital, where the fame of Canova ever experienced the most marked opposition, has described it as possessing the highest excellences in composition, character, and execution—thus concluding, "Be assured my commendations are brought to a close, only because words are wanting to convey what I feel[1]." As respects appropriate expression, and the graces of elegant action, this figure merits all that has been said; but however hazar-

[1] Letter of M. Quatremere du Quincy to Count Cicognara, Paris, 27th Feb. 1813. The Count has designated Paris as the place "dove Canova aveva il maggior numero di invidiosi della sua gloria;" an assertion which he has subsequently qualified; but it is certain the French artists betrayed great jealousy of the talents of Canova, and of the attentions paid him by Buonaparte: his works, also, were severely criticized in the French journals, &c.

dous to oppose the voice of almost universal praise, the proportions may be deemed not entirely symmetrical, while the whole conception bears very marked traces of individuality.

Canova has generally represented his personages engaged in some external event, or animated by passing emotion. To this practice the *Palamedes* is an exception; the attitude, erect and firm, is yet one of entire repose, and the countenance exhibits the calm of mental tranquillity. With this production as a whole, the artist is said to have remained unsatisfied, esteeming the flanks and the gluteal muscles too feeble; but while the superlative beauty of the head—the bust—the lower extremities, is obvious, few eyes can detect this alleged deficiency; and the Palamedes will be ranked among the works which most nearly approach those Grecian models, where the ideal of physical and of moral beauty is pourtrayed in the majesty of corporeal and intellectual serenity. This statue is connected with a circumstance which

nearly proved fatal to the sculptor. It was the constant practice of the latter, rigidly to investigate every part before finally dispatching any work: whilst thus employed, the supports suddenly gave way, the colossal mass was precipitated to the ground, fractured into several pieces, and he himself narrowly escaped being crushed beneath the weight. Of this accident, the owner was immediately advertised,—the artist, with his accustomed disinterestedness, insisting on retaining the fragments, and commencing on a fresh block. This, from similar feelings of liberality, was opposed; and the statue, skilfully reunited, by the visible effects of its misfortune, only the more resembles an antique [1].

[1] These anecdotes were related to the author by the accomplished owner himself, the Marquis Sommariva, while examining the statue in question, in his beautiful villa on the lake of Como, where it now remains. The circumstance of the figure falling is thus alluded to by a living poet, with felicitous epigrammatic effect:—

" ——— Tu sei, crudele invida morte,
Che al suol lo traggi dall' eburneo scanno
Che redivivo lo credesti ancora !"

For the space of more than two centuries, no modern had been able to arouse the slumbering powers of sculpture to the creation of those mighty forms, or to the delineation of those fierce passions which approach the terrible in art — when Canova, in 1802, presented to Italy the celebrated group of *Creugas* and *Damoxenus*. These combatants, after contending during a whole day at the *Nemean* games ineffectually for the pugilistic crown, agreed each to receive a blow without defence, and thus to decide the victory. The former, to whom the lot assigned to give the first blow, struck his opponent on the front; but the latter, with more deadly purpose, required his adversary, placing the left hand on his head, to expose the side. In this position Creugas is represented, while Damoxenus stands in the attitude of one who collects all his strength to launch a mortal stroke; and so forcibly is the attention aroused to the inevitable danger of the one, and the brutal fury of the other, that we anticipate the fatal consequences

—we expect to hear the blow—we behold the ruptured side—the bleeding entrails—listen to the ferocious exultation of the conqueror, and the execrations of the spectators [1].

In whatever light these figures are regarded, whether in relation to technical skill, propriety and justness of expression, or impressive and characteristic effect, they will without doubt rank among the most wonderful productions of the chisel. Combining extraordinary power with great agility, they yet present nothing forced, exaggerated, or inconsistent, but all

[1] See Pausanias, *Arcadia*. The artist has closely followed the historian, whose details are given in the text, because nothing is more usual than to hear objections made to this group, that the attitude of Creugas is altogether contrary to science. This only shews the ignorance of the objectors; the action, indeed, lays open, instead of protecting the body; but to those acquainted with the circumstances, this is the obvious intention of the sculptor. The atrocity of Damoxenus overreached itself; according to a law regulating these combats, which forbade the killing of an adversary, he was banished, and the crown placed on the head of the slain Creugas.

is true, simple, and harmonious. Without ideal elevation of form, a refinement irreconcilable with the subject, and opposed to the practice of antiquity, they exhibit the most faithful imitation of nature, under attitudes calculated to elicit, though seeming to conceal the resources of art. The position of Damoxenus, in particular, would throw in the way of mediocrity insurmountable obstacles, and even to Canova occasioned many difficulties. The figure, retiring as it were within itself—the concentration of power—the contraction of the muscles — the movement of the arms [1], and of the lower extremities, in uni-

[1] A celebrated artist has found fault with the right hand, as not being adapted, by its perpendicular position, to penetrate between the ribs of his opponent. Let any one, however, try to draw back the arm, bent so that the hand, extended and horizontal, may be brought in contact with the side, a little below the bosom, and he will find that the position is not only unnatural, but is unfriendly to giving a powerful blow. On the contrary, as placed by Canova, perpendicularly, with the open palm on the side, will be found not only the most easy, but the position best calculated for

son with this confined position, yet retaining an appearance of agility to press forward and second the meditated blow—the oblique withdrawing of the head—all required the most consummate anatomical science, while a natural tendency to the rigid powerless and ungraceful was incurred; but here all is bold, vigorous and flowing, the contours preserving firmness and breadth, with that sweetness and delicacy, which ought never to be disjoined even from a style the most masculine and severe. To that of his adversary the expanded and fearless attitude of Creugas affords a fine contrast; his form, also, though not of such Herculean mould, is more elegant, and his whole appearance more noble, without being less manly. The expression of the latter is likewise more gentle, though the arm thrown up with an air of defiance, and the unguarded side presented with a look of indignant consciousness,

effect, the hand being naturally thrown into the horizontal by the action of the muscles, when the arm is extended in striking. See Williams' Travels, &c.

that the intentions of his adversary are as sanguinary as his countenance indicates. By thus distinguishing Creugas by more amiable and elevated traits, the artist has skilfully invested his situation with a deep dramatic interest, which powerfully awakens sympathy in his fate. There is to be observed in this figure a profound intelligence of nature, with a felicitous expression of that knowledge, in the involuntary position of defence, and in the unconscious knitting of the muscles, which may be pronounced at least unsurpassed in the most esteemed works of antiquity. But on this subject it will be gratifying to peruse the sculptor's own explanation, sent along with a model of the statue, to the Venetian Academy:—" This pugilist, in sign of having given his blow, has thrown down the gauntlets, with which the hands of his adversary Damoxenus still remain armed, who stands in act of returning the assault according to compact. The attitude in which the former is represented, his attack being just over, was chosen by

me in order to denote that he was an *athleta*. To the habits of his profession it would not be agreeable that he should remain tranquil and indifferent at the moment of being assaulted by his competitor. At the same time, also, though he knows that he must sustain without opposition the blow agreed upon, yet Nature, of her own accord, does not fail to suggest to him a certain undefined clenching of the hands and position of apparent defence. This posture I likewise considered favourable to the general lines of the naked; and thus with firm and stedfast foot, with raised arm, side exposed, and head erect, he might await, whilst he also favoured the barbarous stroke of his enemy, who would have had no field for planting it, if Creugas had presented himself in any attitude more weak and relaxed[1]." Together with this

[1] This admirable exposition ought for ever to set at rest the objections made in the first instance by the Venetian artists, and since frequently repeated, "that Creugas was apparently as much on the offensive as the defensive." Some critics even seem not to have

analysis of the statue was sent the following letter, honourable alike to the grateful feelings of the writer, as to the body thus addressed:—

"Era da gran tempo ch' io desiderava offerire alcun saggio de' miei studj a codesta spettabile Accademia di belle arti, in contrassegno della sincera stima e figliale riconoscenza, che le professo per avermi somministrato li primi elementi dell' arte, e con atto di sua predelezione, creato membro dagli anni miei più giovanile. A tal giusto mio desiderio, non potei dare più sollècito compimento, occupato come fui parecchi anni in opere, le quale non mi lasciarono loco ad eseguire a mio genio qualche lavoro di carattere robusto. Avendo pertanto in questi ultimi anni avuto alcun' agio di soddisfare in parte a questa mia volontà, ho il piacere di presentare a codesta spettabile Società il presente gesso della statua d'un mio pugillatore, poc' ansi finita, giacche costa non si era per anco

observed the hands bared of the gauntlets, which are represented on the ground.

veduta alcuna mia opera di simile carattere; gesso, che appunto per questo puo forse aver maggior convenienza di venire situato in un' Academia. Amarei dunque che mi onorassero sopra di esso del loro ingenuo sentimento, per assicurarmi se la via da mi tenuta, nell' intendere la verità, sappia meritarsi la loro approvazione. Con si lusenghevole idea ch' è appunto l'unica nel cammin della gloria, a cui tendono le nostre fatiche, pieno di profondo respetto, gratitudine e considerazione mi protesto.

" ANTONIO CANOVA [1].

" *Roma, primo Maggio* 1802."

The group now described, finished soon after the Perseus, was, like that work, pur-

[1] In this letter Canova expresses " his sincere esteem and filial gratitude to that Academy which had supplied the first elements of art, and of which he had been admitted a member from his earliest years; and further requests to be honoured with the opinion of the honourable Body, whether the path now pursued by him merits that approbation, to secure which is the great object of his labours."

chased by the Papal Government, and placed in the *Vatican.* The Conqueror of Medusa, and these Combatants, one on each side, as the three figures now stand in the same cabinet of the most valuable museum in the world, present excellences so great, and of a character so diversified, as would alone be sufficient to preserve through the revolution of ages the name of the sculptor. Yet, compared with the mighty series of his labours, how small a portion do these compose? On this occasion, the artist received from the hands of the Pontiff, investiture in the two Roman orders of knighthood, and was farther nominated "Inspector-General of the Fine Arts in Rome and the whole Pontifical States, with an annual pension of 400 crowns;"— an office, as now revived by Pius VII. in favour of Canova, not surpassed in the splendour of its first institution by Leo X., when conferred on Raffaelle [1].

[1] The *diploma*, creating him Inspector, dated 10th August 1802, was published immediately after, and may be seen in the "Memorie Trivigiane," p. 220.

Under the inspiration awakened by the contemplation of those wonders of Grecian art which once adorned the Athenian temples, then known only through the designs of Stuart, but which now constitute the boast of our own capital, the combat of *Theseus* and the *Centaur* was imagined. This colossal group offers to view an action the most energetic, with corresponding vigour and sublimity of style and execution. The hero with one knee presses the monster to the earth, holding in deadly grasp its throat with his left hand, while with the right wielding a massive club, he is about to terminate the conflict by a decisive blow. In this composition the arrangement is peculiarly beautiful; — the master-lines are varied, flowing, and fully developed; —the attitudes and expressions powerfully contrasted; —and the eye is delighted by the facility with which it embraces and com-

In paying a just tribute to the talents of Canova in this official instrument, Pius has left a striking proof of his own good taste, by receding from common-place forms in expressing this applause.

prehends the simple pyramidal grouping of the whole. The moral sentiment, also, the superiority of knowledge—of virtue over brutal strength, is well preserved;—all is yet teeming with life and energy; but the noble and triumphant air of Theseus—his powerful and vigorous frame—his advantageous position, leave no doubt of victory, while the last efforts of his foe preserve sufficient animation to add the interest, and the sublimity of danger. Minuter criticism discovers much individual excellence in the skilful union of majesty with strength and agility in the form of Theseus—the exquisite character and lovely contours of the head—the truth and wonderful detail of the extremities. In the Centaur, the head is a perfect model of a peculiar and characteristic beauty, not the less to be admired as a happy adaptation from the antique;—the relaxing grasp of the monster's right hand is nature itself;—but, above all, the springing and almost living exertion of the posterior limbs in struggling to regain an erect posture,

is the very perfection of art. To attain this fidelity, the artist is said to have made repeated studies from nature, pressing the living horse to the ground by external violence [1]: Antiquity, indeed, could afford little assistance, for the most complete of its equestrian remains is here surpassed. By this close investigation we also discover, or imagine we perceive some blemishes. In the Theseus, the lower region of the abdomen seems to be too protuberant, making the requisite allowance for the violence of his action. Perhaps, also, the lower limbs are too athletic as compared with the general proportions of the figure, more especially of the upper part of the torso. In the Centaur, that portion of the form which bears the resemblance of humanity, appears too diminutive in relation to the monster part to which it is attached. A being thus constituted, however, as it is wholly the creation of fancy, so the will of the artist becomes

[1] Cicognara, Storia dell Scult. tom. iii.

more despotic from the absence of fixed principles, and the impossibility of a direct comparison with nature.

This group, modelled in 1805, was not finally completed till fourteen years afterwards. Its original destination was the city of Milan, but it is now at Vienna. A Venetian nobleman, in other respects a judicious and independent writer, informs us, that this change of situation was made at the request of the Emperor to the sculptor, and with the consent of all concerned. An artist has not commonly the disposal of such works as are already commissioned; but the meaning of this courtly phrase is sufficiently obvious—*Venice* is under the dominion of *Austria*. The transaction, however, did *not* give universal satisfaction;—the Milanese regret this among other losses which their capital has sustained from the Germans [1]. It is but justice to state, that Francis appears

[1] Was it also with the consent of *all* concerned that the Mosaic copy of L. da Vinci's *Cenacolo* was removed to Vienna?

properly to value the work of which he has obtained possession. An elegant temple of Grecian Doric has been erected in the Royal Gardens for its reception. The presence of Canova was alone waited for, to place it in this its destined shrine, when his lamented death cut short more important avocations. This undertaking, thus acquiring a melancholy interest, has since been accomplished by less able hands [1].

The class of heroic compositions, though far from being exhausted, may with propriety be closed by the group of *Hercules* and *Lychas*, the most terrible conception of Canova's mind. Alcides, raging from the effects of Dejanira's fatal present, has already seized the hapless messenger by the hair and one of the feet; and heaving him head-downwards over his right shoul-

[1] When the Author was in Vienna, in the spring of 1823, the group had then been placed on the pedestal, but still remained cased in planks. By the application, however, of the *proper means*, he enjoyed the opportunity of examining this beautiful production.

der, is in act of hurling him through the air into the waves below.

" The burning influence shoots through every vein;
Fierce roll his eyes on Œta's shady steep;
Unhappy Lychas! author of his pain,
Thee first he seiz'd, and plung'd amid the deep [1]."

In vain the wretched youth clings to an altar, or grasps the lion's skin;—every resistance must give way;—the imagination follows him circling through empty space, and disappearing in the distant spot, which the frenzied eye of his tormentor seems to mark out. This power of conveying energetic impression—the first and most important quality in works of art, is combined with great truth and beauty of detail. The present, indeed, is one of the most scientific, as also one of the most difficult labours of the artist. The figure of Hercules, under a different and perhaps more arduous aspect, preserves all the dignity of character and fidelity of representation which distinguish the *Farnesian*

[1] V. of Missirini, p. 40.

statue;—the force and ease of attitude—the finely pronounced action, particularly of the pectoral and abdominal muscles—the union of firmness and of elasticity in the position, and of elegance and strength in form of the lower extremities, render it a perfect canon in its peculiar range. The necessarily contorted posture of Lychas, on the other hand, being such as no living model could maintain, caused infinite trouble in the composition; but though this representation of terror, anguish, and youthful imbecility, be the sole creation of science and of imagination, it is faultless in the former, while it is devoid of mannerism, as without extravagance. The relative proportions of these two figures, however, Lychas being represented too diminutive, that Hercules may appear more gigantic, seem to border on the exaggerated. This disproportion of the agents produces a corresponding disagreement in the action. The vast power which is evidently exercised—the violent straining of such enormous members, does not harmo-

nize with the exility of the being against whom energies so irresistible are exerted. By this attempt to heighten them, the effects of contrast are in fact partially destroyed, and the sublimity intended to be expressed through the idea of superhuman power, is lessened by the force too conspicuously employed on an object so incapable of opposition. Either the strength of the sufferer should have approached nearer to an equality with his who inflicts the pain;—or, retaining the present dimensions of Lychas, the action of Alcides should have been less vehement. In the one case, the appearance of great exertion would have been justified,—in the other, the contrast would have been more noble.

11. In the preceding analysis of the principal statues and groups composing the first class, many of great merit, such as the Hector and Ajax—the Equestrian models —the statues of Ferdinand—of Washington — of Pius VI., have been silently

passed over. Notwithstanding these omissions, this part of the subject has extended to considerable length ; it was here necessary, however, to introduce a greater number of examples than will henceforth be requisite, both from incidents connected with these illustrative of the life, but chiefly from a desire of doing justice to the fame of the artist. Canova, from various circumstances, is better known, and his claims to superiority more universally recognised, in productions embracing the softer elegances of female loveliness, than in the severe and robust forms of masculine strength. His chisel has been allowed a restricted pre-eminence in sculpturing the charms of youth or the smiles of beauty, while it has too commonly been deemed unequal to the sublimities of deeper emotion, or the moral dignity of mental energy. To have dwelt on the proofs of this latter, and perhaps higher species of genius, may therefore be esteemed not only excusable, but proper. On the contrary, the works comprehended in the second di-

vision, possessing the former kind of excellence, will require less to be insisted upon; more confined notices will also suffice to illustrate a class more numerous indeed, but distinguished by kindred expression, and less isolated grace.

In considering the second division of the works of Canova—namely, those compositions distinguished rather by elegance than force, we may begin with the statue of *Hebe*, both as being the earliest in the series which commences with the eighteenth century, and as it displays the simple attractions of mere juvenility and loveliness, unimpressed by exalted sentiment. Four times has this subject been repeated, and "four times," to use the flowery but not exaggerated language of panegyric, "has the sculptor seemed to pour from the golden cup of the goddess of youth, the ambrosia served at the feasts of the Divinities [1]."

[1] "Orazione in morte del March. A. Canova, &c. *Cicognara*." This statue was first sculptured in 1796, then repeated in 1801-14 and 16. Of all these repetitions the best is that of 1814, now in the possession

In each of these repetitions some variation has been introduced; but the only important improvement consists in having substituted a support more suitable to the simplicity of this art. The clouds on which the earlier copies of this figure rested, are of a nature too evanescent—too immaterial to constitute legitimate subjects of statuary. Even with the subsequent amendments, it may still be inquired, whether this production does not verge on, or even exceed the limits prescribed to the separate provinces of the chisel and the pencil. Hebe, descending through the sky, and poised in mid air, as if just touching with the extremity of one delicate foot the throne of Jove,—her floating ringlets, and transparent drapery streaming in the breeze created by her own motion, seems rather to belong to the magic illusions of paint-

of *Lord Cawdor*. One of the earliest is now in pawn to a banker at Venice, or was in 1823, and had suffered considerably from the dampness of a *Venetian* ground-floor.

ing, than to the sober realities of sculpture. Such a performance assimilates, at least, to the former taste for innovation in pursuit of excellences inconsistent with real grandeur, from which taste had previously suffered its greatest deterioration, and to have banished which is to be numbered among the merits, while it added to the early difficulties of Canova. This departure from rigid purity being overlooked, and let it be remembered, that, except the youthful work of Eurydice, the present supplies the only instance of a similar style, —this figure, for buoyancy of attitude—legerity and elegance of form—joyous yet unaffected expression—delicacy and softness in the naked, is truly beautiful, or, in the words of the poet, "*muto incanto*," "a mute enchantment." The merit of originality is also justly due to the invention. In the few relievos of antiquity, in which this goddess is supposed to be introduced, the identity is doubtful, and only one of the Greek writers describes such

a statue [1]. In thus treating a classic subject, solely from the rich stores of his own imagination, the artist has preserved a congenial air in deportment as in ornament,—the style of countenance—the arrangement of the hair—the light drapery fastened below the bosom, the charms of which, with the finely turned shoulders and back it thus leaves exposed, all seem dictated by some Grecian muse. The golden vase held in the right hand, and the cup of the same metal placed in the left, are also warranted by the frequent practice of ancient as well as of modern masters;—still this appears an innovation on that simplicity and unity of effect so indispensable in refined art, which no authority ought to sanction.

[1] Pausanias, who states that Nausicles of Argos, nearly cotemporary, or rather before Praxiteles, executed a statue of Hebe, of gold and ivory, for the Corinthians. Whether Canova derived his first idea from the description of the historian, or from ancient relievi, or from either, is unknown. *Cicognara, D'Argenville, Winkleman*, &c.

If motion were a subject altogether proper for sculpture, the Hebe of Canova might be deemed not inferior as an imitation to the Aurora of Guido in the sister art. The impressions we receive are in both cases similar;—we gaze upon the respective productions with the same *feeling* of regret with which we regard a lovely object about to disappear from view. The sculptor used to inform the few friends with whom he conversed freely about his own works, that the original intention, in thus representing the Goddess of Youth as rapidly gliding along, was to indicate the fleeting state of human existence, particularly during this its most interesting and most delightful stage. The idea combines the beauty of the highest poetry with all the force of truth, and may excuse the insertion, as it suggested the sentiments, of the following

SONNET.

As fade the hues of summer's golden skies,
Or droop spring's early flowers, at evening close,
Touch'd by the gales that breathe of winter's snows;
Thus scarcely mark'd youth's lovely season flies:
Those are but nature's action and repose,
Does man then fall—no more again to rise?
Debasing fear! in the short span of time
We view th' establish'd round of matter's change;—
The mind's bright scope, and ever-daring range,
May not be trac'd by Seraph-thought sublime;
Yet splendid works to earth unknown and strange,
Respire of Heaven, the soul's last—native clime:
Shall powers that gave the vital impress—die,
While stone thus lives in youthful immortality!

The statues of the three *Dancing Nymphs* maintain a similar character of unideal, or rather of less intellectual beauty, which distinguishes the Hebe. Not that any of these works is devoid of beautiful and appropriate expression, but demanding little of elevation, the sensibility which they convey is of an inferior nature. In the Dancers, it seems to have been intended to represent a progressive action [1]. The first

[1] This continuity of action is sadly opposed by separation of *place*, one of the figures being in Italy, another in England, and the third in Russia.

crowned with a chaplet of roses, and smiling in anticipated enjoyment, is leading off the measure;—the second, who has hung the rosy wreath on her arm, during a soft and languishing movement, lays a forefinger expressively on her chin, seeming to direct fond yet chastened glances to some favoured spectator;—the third, entering fully into the excitement, has just struck the cymbals, which she elevates above her head, and in act of bounding into the air, shows every sentiment absorbed in the animation of the present moment. In each of these figures are discovered peculiar and characteristic beauties; the second is perhaps the most beautiful, and affords a fine illustration of the waving contour. In all we trace the same admirable disposition—the same light and graceful attitude—the same fire and precision in seizing a momentary action,—but above all, the same looks of the most animated pleasure, so tempered with the purest modesty, that

each may be addressed in the language of the poet,

—— Spargi intorno si onesta dolcezza
Che innanzi a te non ha chi pensi vile [1] !

Canova is frequently charged as affecting a studied elegance of composition and of attitude in the representation of the female form. By the eye of rigid criticism, indeed, an appearance of more elaborate grace may occasionally be detected; but where this occurs, it will always be found in unison with—or even conducing to characteristic truth of expression. If, then, in the works now described, stricter simplicity might have been preserved, it must also be admitted, that the very nature of the subject requires an action, in some degree artificial. Even the attitude of Hebe, remote as it is in some respects from the position of one who actually ministers in her office, is yet so full of spirit —so accordant with the air of youthful hi-

[1] Thou pleasest with such modest grace
No thought of thee is vile or base !

larity diffused over the whole figure,—so adapted to display the finely moulded arm and bosom, that to have rendered it more simple,—more composed, would have in so far lessened the individuality and the beauty of the conception. In like manner, who does not feel, that the form studiously displayed,—a drapery somewhat solicitously arranged,—the arms, neck, and delicate feet uncovered with artful negligence, the slight *minauderies* discoverable in the Dancers, add to the fidelity of representation, and are to be numbered among the graphic felicities of art [1]?

[1] The statue of the first dancing Nymph was originally executed for Josephine. On being sent to Paris it was exhibited in that city in 1812 along with *Terpsicore*, another work of Canova, and commissioned by the Marquis Sommariva. These marbles called forth great diversity of criticism. Among others, the following spirited remarks appeared in a celebrated journal: "Si nous vivions encore dans ces tems où l'amour propre des artistes se montroit avec naiveté, et où l'on ne trouvoit pas mauvais qu'ayant la conscience de leurs talens ils fussent les premiers à se rendre justice, nous pourrions voir sans surprise *M. Canova* renouveller pour ces deux statues un trait de *Xeuxis*, et écrire sous

Were it required to name a production of sculpture in which the brightest enchantments of beauty are blended with the more elevated charms of elegance and of dignity, few works would present themselves to the mind before the *Graces* of Canova. In the remains of the later and better eras of Grecian taste,—for at an earlier period, as we learn from Pausanias, they were clothed,—these divinities are represented without drapery; thus indicating the true source of grace in the absence of art, and in the ingenuousness of nature;

> Gratia cum Nymphis geminisque sororibus audet
> Ducere nuda choros.———

Superior to both these modes of antiquity, is the invention in this group. "The beauteous Sisters" are represented entwined in a mutual embrace, and supporting each other during a moment of repose; while a long slender veil or scarf, which may be supposed to have just been

la plinthe, "*on les critiquera plus facilement qu'on ne les imitera.*" Journal des Arts Scien. Litt. &c. Feb. 1813.

employed in guiding their light steps through the mazes of the dance is still folded on their arms. This, falling in the most unstudied manner, seems guided only by chance, yet the hand of modesty itself could not better have arranged its folds. All the beauties and the science of the naked are thus displayed; and at the same time, as the artist himself intended, it is inculcated that even Nature may be improved by judicious ornaments in dress, demeanour, or education [1]. The grouping also is no less charming than new: each, with reciprocal action the most tender and engaging, contributes in maintaining the unity of the whole; and in whatever point of view the spectator may be placed, the eye is almost equally delighted.

Nor in this work, is the execution less to be admired, either on account of the difficulties to be overcome, or from the intrinsic merits of the performance. By the interlacing of the arms, and the proxi-

[1] Letters of Canova.

mity, yet disunion of the contours of the limbs and of the torsi, *trafori* or perforations in the block the most tedious and extensive were rendered necessary; so that admiration is excited how the internal parts of the group could have been wrought[1]. But a technicality thus arduous—details thus laborious, have not affected the beauty or the science of this noble production. The vital and elastic softness of the naked —the flowing sweetness of the outlines— the exquisite shape and delicacy of finish in the extremities—the harmonious variety of the salient and re-entering curves—the correctness and graceful choice of the forms, are scarcely excelled by the finest remains of antiquity, while the labours of modern masters will rarely endure a comparison.

To this superiority in composition and in execution, the expression may be deem-

[1] The Author has listened to more than one dispute, Whether the figures were hewn from one block, or separately finished and afterwards united. Certainly the *mechanique* of the Laocoon is *not more* difficult, yet that group is composed of five separate pieces.

ed inferior: Not that the countenances betray any deficiency of suavity or of feeling; but there is not in the air and character of the heads, that ideal loveliness which seems the realized dream of rapt enthusiasm, glowing with all the tenderness and vivacity of nature, yet never recalling her individual traits. The spectator acknowledges the beauty of the features, and feels the gracious sentiments which they respire, still he sees but images of mortal charms,—and the lineaments appear to resemble those whose living influence he has experienced. In a subject purely imaginative, a style thus confined, in which a general idea, or abstract expression of loveliness is not strongly perceptible, must be pronounced defective, in as far as it assimilates to partial nature, however captivating the examples imitated may be. Nor is this to be considered an observation limited to a single instance. In his conception of female character universally, this master frequently betrays an

imperfect knowledge of that lofty and refined ideal which distinguishes the best works of antiquity.

When Italy was stripped of its most valued sculptures, Florence being deprived of

"That bending statue which enchants the world,"

Canova was engaged to supply, by an exertion of his genius, the ravished labour of Greece. Two conditions, however, were previously insisted on, which shewed both his judgment and his modesty: it was stipulated, that the substitute should not be a copy—nor occupy the vacant pedestal of the absent goddess. On the one hand, a copy, whatever excellences it possessed, could have added little increase to the fame of the sculptor; on the other, "he wished to avoid the imputation of appearing to deem himself capable of producing any thing equal to the Venus de' Medici." Or, as he has elegantly expressed it in another letter, "The Greeks, equally with nature, are my instructors; it behoves me,

then, to preserve that deference which is due from a scholar to his preceptor;—my Venus, therefore, shall remain at a humble distance, like an attendant nymph, who, in her absence, may attract for a moment the regards of the sorrowing votaries of the departed divinity [1]."

The *Venus* of Canova, like her celebrated prototype, is represented as having just issued from the bath. A robe caught up in a moment of alarm, partially veils her lovely form, one corner descending obliquely in front, the rest falling in small and graceful folds to the ground, thus affording an elegant support to the figure, which is poised on the right extremity, the left foot thrown back, and the leg gently bent. In this mantle the right arm, crossed below the bosom, is enveloped, but hardly concealed, so admirable is the execution; while the left in strong contrast is fully exposed, the hand expanded, and pressing

[1] Letter of Canova to Sig. ——— of Venice, July 1806. Canova had before refused to restore the arm of the antique, though pressed to do so.

the drapery to the breast. In other respects, the attitude is nearly the same in the modern as in the ancient statue. The same is the turning of the head on one side, with a look of sudden but pleasing anxiety, as if the expected approach of a beloved object had just been announced; in both the bending of the body in retiring and involuntary delicacy—the shrinking of the limbs with the unconscious action of instinctive modesty, are similar, and in the former touched with not inferior skill. When natural expression is to be pourtrayed, the sculptor of Possagno seldom falls beneath—often rivals the masters of Greece. The proportions, however, are dissimilar, not only as regards the actual dimensions, but as respects their relative harmony; Canova's Venus being in every part larger, and also of a stature naturally more lofty. This latter change appears by no means an improvement; it may, to use the words of an admirer, "*la rende men donna, e più dea*,"—"render the figure more a goddess, and less a woman;" but though more ma-

jestic, it is colder, and without that feminine softness — that attractive loveliness which charm in the ancient statue. In the works, indeed, now under examination, a general tendency may be observed towards heightening the proportions of the female form, and the reverse in that of the opposite sex, which, especially in *bassi relievi*, is frequently too short. Hence, perhaps, arises that imperfect development conspicuous in the Venus, as compared with the sustained and well-defined character, so enchanting in the voluptuous maturity of beauty by which her rival is distinguished. In the contours of the latter there is something inexpressibly beautiful and flowing; their effect comes full upon the eye — yet they are absolutely evanescent — they are rounded into life, and we lose them in the animated marble. The countenance, above all, is most exquisitely feminine; a delicious smile, half bashful, half triumphant, as if demanding, yet fearing admiration, plays up-

on the lips—so light—so transient, like the golden rays of the evening star trembling on the stream—we almost dread its disappearance before we have caught its influence! Where can be the feelings of those who assert the inanimation of a countenance thus beaming with gracious sweetness—with winning softness?—

" Away! there need no words, nor terms precise,
The paltry jargon of the marble mart,
Where pedantry gulls folly—we have eyes:
Blood, pulse, and breast, confirm the Dardan shepherd's prize [1]!

Both statues, however, are certainly emanations of congenial spirits, thus united in genius, though separated in existence by twenty centuries. In each we discover relative merits, which, by approximating in themselves, transcend all other works of a similar kind. If the ancient excel in seductive beauty, and all-subduing tenderness, the modern is at least equal in elegance of conception, and nobleness of expression.

[1] Byron—Childe Harolde.

" Lo! sculptur'd by Canova's hand,
Appears the soft Cytherian Queen;
Her limbs shed dewy light and bland,
As bath'd just freshly they had been
In cool Idalian stream.

Shrinking she seems from her own view,
In trembling conscious modesty;
To virtue's genuine dictates true,
She veils in innate purity
Charms you thus fairer deem.

On forms so glowing—yet so chaste,
The virgin's eye serene may gaze;
E'en beauty in the youthful breast,
Unveil'd, no sullied thought can raise,
When lovely—because pure.

Ah! had she thus all radiant shone
When dubious claims disturb'd the skies,—
Without a rival she had won
That golden orb—the fairest's prize,
And Troy had stood secure [1]."

No production of his chisel afforded greater satisfaction to the artist than the *Venus Victorious.* The head of this statue is a portrait of *Paolina Buonaparte,* Princess *Borghese,* whose fine style of counte-

[1] *Venere che esce dal Bagno, Ode III. di Missirini,* stanzas 4-10 inclusive.

nance, slightly heightened, nobly harmonizes with the ideal figure. Reposing on a Grecian couch, the goddess is sculptured in a half recumbent posture, her side supported on rich cushions; on these rests the right elbow, the hand gracefully raised to the cheek, while the left, placed on the thigh, holds with gentle touch the fruit of her recent victory. A light robe partially invests her exquisitely moulded limbs, leaving entirely nude the arms and body, the latter of which, particularly in the juncture of the neck, the bosom, and the waving contour of the flank, is absolutely a miracle of art. Canova has perhaps most excelled in *ritratti ideati*,—compositions which in the head present the traits of an individual; and than the present, he never produced a more perfect work. It respires the breathing freshness and voluptuous beauty of Titian's brilliant forms, to whose manner of design it bears a close resemblance, united with the grace, purity, and correctness of antiquity. Were the expression of complacency—the smile of triumph which plays on the lovely coun-

tenance, more warm and animated, greater perfection in sculpture could hardly be desired [1].

Suggested, indeed, by the preceding, but resembling the antique Dionysiac of Nonnius [2], the *Awakened Nymph* next merits attention. This beautiful marble, now in possession of his Majesty, is, in its class, the most perfect work of the sculptor, whether regard be had to its poetical conception—delightful execution—or refined expression. Reclining on a rock, the Naiad, for such from the urn she appears, has just been roused from sleep by the sound of a lyre, the chords of which are struck by a youthful Love seated at her feet, whose raised eyes are filled with infantine enthusiasm.

[1] The Author has never seen the *marble* statue of this figure, which is kept locked up in the Palazzo Borghese, the Prince, who constantly resides in Florence, keeping the key. Even Canova himself could not obtain a sight of it. The remarks were made on the original model in the studio of the artist.

[2] More commonly known by the name of the Hermaphrodite.

" ——— coll arpa Amor la desta
Sorge sul fianco, e ad ascoltar s'arresta."

The figure half raised, and resting on one arm—the turning of the head—the bending of the torso—in short, the management of the whole attitude is extremely graceful in itself, while it reveals with wonderful force and truth the former position of reposing with the face downwards. Continuity of action, one of the greatest difficulties, as it is one not of the meanest beauties of art, is thus most happily and naturally attained [1]. The lubricity of the limbs—the gentle languor which pervades them, exhibiting the influence of sleep not yet dissipated—the simplicity, yet varied harmony of the outlines — the profound science and glowing nature of the forms, present a series of charms capable of penetrating the coldest heart. Above all is conspicuous the etherial character of the

[1] Perhaps Raffaelle's *Cartoon* of curing the Lame Man, is the most perfect example of this excellence in modern art.

countenance, breathing the exalted fervour of lofty sentiment, and directly elevating the soul to the true object of art—the moral sublimity of pure and noble expression. Canova himself esteemed this work as highly as his modesty would allow him to value any performance of his own. Talking on this subject to one who long enjoyed his unlimited confidence, the author was informed that the sculptor once remarked, "If any proof, and he had subsequently received many, had been wanting, of the correct and highly cultivated taste which so eminently distinguishes the Prince, (meaning his present Majesty, who was then Prince-Regent), such a proof would have been afforded by the preference with which his Highness honoured that work, and by the anxiety evinced to possess it [1]."

The works now described bear only indirect reference to the superiority of their

[1] This Nymph was originally commissioned by Lord Cawdor, but resigned by his Lordship at the personal request of his Majesty.

author in the management of drapery,—a department which, from the period of Grecian refinement, had never before been rightly understood, or at least judiciously treated. From the revival of the arts to the age of Michael Angelo, the drapery was poor and rigid; that great man gave boldness and freedom, but at the same time introduced licentiousness in volume and neglect of form. These evils progressively increased; and latterly a draped figure presented little else than an assemblage of confused masses, from which the head and extremities protruded, frequently without the possibility of tracing their connection. For Canova it was reserved to restore propriety and elegance—to unite truth with selection—and to clothe without concealing nature. In these respects his eminence above every preceding master would be proved by the four sitting figures alone. Seated in an attitude of pensive composure, the *Mother of Napoleon* ranks among the very noblest of the sculptor's labours; and though the design

reminds us of the *Agrippina* of the *Capitol*, it need not shrink from comparison with that celebrated antique. The Ex-Empress *Maria Louisa*, represented with the attributes of the Goddess *Concord*, to model which the artist made a second journey to Paris in 1810, exhibits a grave, sustained, and dignified style of composition. The drapery in this statue is the most laboured and perhaps the most highly finished of all; —but the features, as also the shape of the arms are bad, and ill adapted for sculpture, —defects to be attributed solely to the model. Princess *Esterhazy*, seated on a rustic support, and occupied in sketching the surrounding landscape, is distinguished for lightness of effect and simplicity of attire. The Muse *Polymnia*, originally commenced as a portrait of the Princess of *Lucca*, but subsequently converted into an ideal composition, is characterized by simplicity, dignity, and a most intellectual expression of deep thought, as if meditating on some lofty theme,—

" No! from those lips not living sounds are sent;
'Tis gesture renders silence eloquent [1]."

A very elegant class of compositions consists of those *Ideal Heads*, which were finished during the hours of relaxation from more laborious studies, and generally presented as pledges of remembrance to absent friends. These works display a beautiful combination of fancy and of reality;—all being representations of celebrated females, where the artist has endeavoured to realize the glowing descriptions of poesy, or the more veracious traits of history, according to his own refined conceptions of character. These productions are numerous; the following are perhaps the most perfect:—*Corinna*, a noble countenance, exhibiting the majestic regularity of the Grecian ideal.—*Sapho*, more tender, a gentle smile plays about the mouth,—

" Say, Muse of Love, boast of the Lesbian Isle,
On Phaon—or thy Sculptor dost thou smile [2]?"

[1] Greek Epigram, probably written on a statue of the same Muse.

[2] Italian Epigram by *Negri*.

Laura,—features less regular, but delicate, and full of sweetness, in accordance with her admirer's

" Vedi ben quanta in lei dolcezza piove."

Beatrice—Dante's " *Donna beata e bella*," is a most enchanting face, lovely, mild, and pure. But the most glowing portraiture of female loveliness—of soft, seductive, yielding woman, is " her of Troy."

" Beyond Imagination's power,
Beyond the Bard's defeated art—
With immortality her dower,
Behold the *Helen* of the heart [1]."

III. The Cenotaphs and Funereal Monuments with which the genius of Canova has enriched different countries of Europe, greatly contributed to extend his fame, while they constitute a numerous and interesting division of his works. These are of two kinds—architectural designs supporting detached figures, and simple tablets in *relievo*. In the former the statues are either

[1] Byron. It is not generally known that this is the embellished portrait of the lady, who *par politesse* is styled Marchesa C——a.

as in the Tombs of the Popes, on account of their intimate connection with the advances of early life, already described,—or of the natural proportions; in the latter, the figures are always of the size of nature.

One of the grandest, most solemn, and imposing sepulchral erections, with which the arts ever honoured the memory of departed worth or greatness; and a production strongly proving the original powers of the artist,—is the Monument of the Arch-Duchess *Maria Christina* [1]. This noble composition had its origin in a model executed by the sculptor in 1792, at the instance of certain individuals in Venice, who attempted by subscription to raise a memorial over the neglected ashes of Titian. Through political events, and the death of its principal promoter, this meritorious endeavour failed. The design thus remaining unappropriated, was, with

[1] Daughter of Maria Theresa, of Austria, and wife of Prince Albert, of Saxony. The inscription thus runs with simplicity and brevity: "Mariæ Christinæ, "Austriacæ, Alberti Saxoniæ Principis, Conjugi."

the necessary alterations, adopted by its author on the present occasion. The first sketch in clay was placed in the Venetian Academy of Fine Arts, and—such are the vicissitudes to which even the best and the wisest are exposed, this very model is now in progress of execution as a monument to the memory of Canova himself[1].

The tomb of the Arch-Duchess, in the church of the Augustines at Vienna, consists of nine figures, a lion and medallion, all of the natural size. It has for a groundwork a simple pyramid of greyish

[1] The design to erect a monument to Titian was chiefly begun and carried on by Zuliani, the early patron of Canova, to which his death in 1795 was a fatal blow. The original programme for the subscription is still preserved, and is headed "Agli Amatori delle "Belle Arti;" and goes on to state, that several lovers of the fine arts had resolved to employ Canova in erecting a tomb in the church *de' Frari* over the remains of Titian. The model sent by the former, and approved of, is then described. It appears that the number of associates was to be limited to seventy, who were each to subscribe 100 sequins, to be paid by two annual instalments, the first in April 1794.

marble placed on a plain square basement, from which two steps lead up to a door-way in the centre of the tomb. In front, and on the left of this entrance, disposed in the manner of a procession, are two groups of three figures each. *Virtue*, a youthful female of afflicted yet dignified mien, accompanied by two young virgins bearing garlands and torches, is carrying in an urn the ashes of the deceased. On the second step at a short distance stands *Beneficence*, supporting an aged and infirm old man, behind whom is a child in the attitude of prayer. Opposite to these, on the right reclining on the steps and resting on a couchant lion, the tutelary genius of Saxony appears mournfully to regard the melancholy train. Above, *Felicity* with an attendant cherub, is transporting to heaven the portrait of the Princess. Nothing can exceed the beauty and the pathos which reign here; —the varied expression of grief—the solemn simplicity of attire and of deportment—the slow and silent pace with which the procession seems to move forward—

the virtues represented peculiarly distinguishing the deceased—all conspire to fill the mind with sorrow and regret. The difficulty, also, of combining into one whole, by means so limited as are the resources of sculpture, here unaided by the graces of architecture, such a numerous assemblage of separate figures, may in some degree be appreciated from the fact, that in no monument, ancient or modern, has even a similar attempt been made. Yet how beautifully, and with what simplicity, is this unity of effect accomplished. Funereal wreaths, and their own positions combine the figures of the same group. A garland dropped by chance unites the groups, still more firmly connected by a rich pall, which, spread diagonally upon the steps, breaks their dull uniformity and presents a pleasing line to the view. Judicious arrangement contributes not less to this harmonious result. The central one finely connects the extreme groups, which balance, yet strongly contrast each other,—the one standing, the other reposing,—one draped, the other

naked. The eye in all positions is gratified by harmony and variety, yet without divining the secret of the enchantment: every thing is in the only place fitted for its reception, yet all seems the happy consequence of casual combination: the whole presents that perfection of art, by which art itself the most profound is concealed.

Sibi quisquis ———
Speret idem, sudet multum, frustraque laboret.

If such a term may be applied to a production from the chisel of Canova, the Tomb of his country's Shakespeare—*Alfieri*, is certainly a failure,—though twice modelled, and under the twofold inspiration of friendship for the poet, and regard for her by whose affection it was raised [1]. The works of genius, however, do not always in excellence respond to the care bestowed upon them,—and the feelings of the man may sometimes cramp the powers of the artist. A colossal figure of mourn-

[1] The Countess of Albany.

ing Italy, and the urn of the departed, whose medallion portrait appears in the centre, compose this monument. The female is not without nobleness of aspect—but cold, and devoid of grace; while the proportions, though intrinsically fine, overpower the inferior magnitude of the other parts. In execution the drapery displays great force, yet with little elegance in the arrangement, or skill in unfolding the subjacent forms. Distinctive character is also wanting. Alfieri is recalled to the memory, not presented to the mind, by a small relievo; and if the merely ornamental accessories of the masks, lyre, and laurel crowns, which tend rather to break up than to enrich the general effect, be removed, there is nothing to discriminate the tomb of the poet. Still we view in the general design the impress of a great mind—simplicity, while there is something extremely affecting in the tower-crowned Italy, bending in tears over the ashes of one whose loss her enslaved condition and exhausted energies seem so incapable of soon redeeming.

SONNET.

O Italy! long first in arms and art,
Though now thy glories to expiry wain;
Why thus depress'd, what recent woes impart
Fresh cause of tears;—what sorrows still remain?
Yes! in that sepulchre's cold marble heart,
Low sleeps the Bard, whose deep, tremendous strain
Strikes the fir'd soul with force of lightning's dart!
Yet cease;—to weep for Alfieri's vain:
His spirit walks abroad—lives in the verse,
That points in thunder at the tyrant's head,
That bids be free—or die on freedom's herse!
Go! rouse thy sons—indignant rouse to tread
This path; then deeds the Muse shall yet rehearse,
Of Heroes living—equal to thy Dead [1]!

To the Mausolea now or formerly described—to the Tombs of Clement XIII.

[1] XXIX. *Sonetto—Missirini.* In quoting this author for the last time, two things are requested to be pardoned—introducing poetry at all—and using considerable liberty with the original. It was thought that verses written under the eye of Canova himself might tend to illustrate the subject, and that consequently to give their *meaning* might not be unacceptable. On the other hand, every one conversant in the

and XIV., of Emo, of Maria of Austria, of Alfieri, the model, though small, of a Cenotaph for Nelson, may be added. This was modelled simply as a tribute of private admiration, and at a time when the French commanded in Italy. It consists of a square basement supporting a superstructure of two circular plinths, adorned with sitting figures representing the four quarters of the globe, and surmounted by a sarcophagus, with relievos of the principal events in the life of the hero [1].—We are

living poetry of Italy, must be aware of its extreme tendency to *amplification* in the good, and to *verbosity* in the bad poets. To the former species of prolixity, *Missirini* adds incessant allusions to the mythological fables of antiquity. Hence the translator has commonly thrown three or four of the Italian stanzas into one, and, generally, though the sentiments be preserved, he has rather imitated than translated.

[1] This is one of the best designs of the artist, and the third instance only in modern times of an isolated monument, being intended to occupy the centre of a circular temple; it is more simple than *Buonaroti's* intended Tomb of Julius II., and more grand than *Nola's* for Pietro de Toledo at Naples.

thus arrived at the more simple class of sepulchral marbles. One, however, holding an intermediate rank, and one of the most beautiful, most pathetic productions ever sculptured, previously demands attention. In the grand relievo on the Tomb for the daughter of the *Marchesa di Santa Croce*, reign a silence—a sadness—a desolation, which speak directly to the heart. Extended on a couch is seen the young and unwasted form, still lovely, as if death were but a soft slumber,—her placid features sweetly contrasting with the varied expression of surrounding sorrow. At the head of the couch stands her eldest brother, of tender years, yet capable of cherishing a grief all his own—while at the foot, surrounding their afflicted mother, whose attitude of woe is not to be described, are seen two younger children, unable fully to comprehend their loss, but grieving because their mother grieves. In the centre, bending over the opposite side, appears the affianced husband of the deceased, the de-

spairing image of blighted hopes and perished love *. Over this disconsolate group one solitary lamp seems to shed a feeble and uncertain ray, powerfully contributing to the general result;—so simple are the means which real genius employs! Many are the instances where spectators have been surprised into tears by this composition, which always remained in the studio of the artist;—one lady, who some time before had sustained a similar loss, actually fainted away at this touching representation of a like destitution.

The other Monumental Relievos are numerous, containing all nearly the same constituent elements of design—namely, a single female form lamenting, with the urn or bust of the deceased placed on a column near. From materials of such simplicity, which apparently afford no scope for variety, great beauty, and even great

* The young lady died of a sudden illness on the very day appointed for her nuptials with the Count D'Haro.

diversity have been elicited. This species of monument, Canova is to be regarded as having invented, or perhaps restored, since the idea of the figure may be found in at least one antique; and was preferred by him, as it permitted objects to be sculptured of the natural size, to which greater force and truth of expression, as well as boldness and refinement of execution, could thus be given. These works are all *bassi relievi*, and though exhibiting infinite beauty of form, delicacy of finish, and precision of outline, they are frequently deficient in strength, from the degree of relief being disproportionate to their dimensions. They often resemble a fine picture, where the light is too equally diffused over the whole surface, without the just equivalent of shade. In lines of such extent, it would have been well if the contours, instead of losing themselves gradually in the plain of the tablet, had been rounded off to a certain altitude, then cut square, as in many of the most admired

relievos of antiquity: a bolder, firmer, and deeper shadow is thus cast, and a more vigorous effect produced.

From monumental, the transition is natural to historical relievos. In this beautiful department of composition Canova never exercised his chisel; for though he modelled numerous and various subjects from mythology, history, and poetry, only one of these, at the repeated instances of a friend, was executed in marble. In this branch of art, however, no less than in others, an important reformation was effected by his example. Sculpture had here suffered great deterioration from the injudicious imitation of painting, so that, from the fifteenth to the close of the eighteenth century, when, about 1790, this master first began the study, as a relaxation from severer labours, not a single relievo remains, composed in a pure style; corruption, on the contrary, progressively increases. He, therefore, in restoring the golden purity of antiquity, first pointed out

the path to be followed; and if he left this career open to the exertions of other artists, wishing to devote his own powers to more lofty pursuits—surely it is not hence to be maintained, that he who excelled in the noblest, could not also have surpassed in the inferior and less difficult provinces of art?

In concluding this analysis of their merits and defects, which however imperfect is believed to be impartial, no observations on these varied productions are required. Examples in different styles have been selected, such as best display the characteristic qualities of the genius and manner of the sculptor. Justice, however, requires to press one remark on the attention. Canova, it has been said, excels only in the *beautiful:* the preceding enumeration of some of his works in the *grand*, will enable to appreciate the validity of this opinion,—which causes merely extrinsic have concurred to originate and to maintain. Notwithstanding native predilection for

sculpture of the bold style, as appears from his own letters, more than forty years and these the best of life had passed away, before an opportunity of indulging this inclination could be commanded. Thus, with the exception of the earliest group executed in Rome — a youthful performance, he was long known, and his fame first established only as the sculptor of the gentler affections, and softer forms of nature. The world is parsimonious of praise; nor is it easy to soar beyond those boundaries to which its fiat has first restricted eminence. It is certain, also, that in sculpture particularly, subjects of tranquil loveliness are more generally pleasing than those of the sublime in forceful passion. This preference obtained even among the Greeks, whose habits and institutions were better calculated than ours to foster a taste for works of the latter description. Perhaps it solely belongs to poetry, by employing reiterated impulses and consecutive impressions, to fire the soul with deeply ter-

rible — yet pleasing emotions. Hence, while the Venus—the Graces—the Hebe —have been multiplied in repetitions;— the Boxers—the Hercules have never been, and the Perseus only once re-produced. These, and other statues of a similar character have thus remained seen and known by comparatively few. All these circumstances were favourable to the propagation and continuance of the invidious criticisms of his rivals, who, unable to deny the superiority of the sculptor in one department, endeavoured to narrow his glory, by limiting his genius to that alone. But in asserting the claims of Canova to the strength of Glycon, equally with his undisputed rights to the graces of Praxiteles, —his defender will act both in accordance with truth, and supported by the concurring approbation of the most enlightened judges.

CHAPTER VIII.

Retrospective view—General peace—Canova deputed by the Pope to recover the works of art belonging to the Holy See—Visit to London—Receives a valuable present from his Majesty—Created Marquis of Ischia on returning to Rome—Colossal statue of Religion, and Temple of Possagno—Renewed labours—Last illness—Death—Funeral obsequies—Anecdotes of his habits and character as a *man*—Benevolence—Friendship—Love—Account of his modes of study, and manner of life as an *artist*—Estimate of Canova's genius and rank in art—Conclusion.

THE principal events that distinguish the first fifteen years of the period, during which Canova was employed on the splendid series of works described in the preceding chapter, have been respectively alluded to in treating of individual performances. In 1802, and eight years afterwards, as already noticed, he was twice called to Paris. In both instances he was received with

marked courtesy by Napoleon; who found the artist no less candid and sincere on the latter occasion, when modelling the portrait of the young Empress, than formerly, when employed on his own likeness. He came daily to the apartments of Maria Louisa, while the sculptor was at work, in order, as he expressed it, *pour l'egayer*, as she was then extremely diffident and reserved—spoke no Italian, and French very indifferently. The youthful bride appeared to be treated with the utmost tenderness, but without that dignified and elevated affection which would have been paid to one, who was considered capable of bearing an equal share in the glory and the cares of a mighty empire. To the acute observer there was apparent in the address of her husband an air of fondling superiority, like that of a man who may amuse himself with a young and tolerably pretty woman, whose person he loves, without much admiring her intellect [1]. From what he then remarked, Canova had

[1] Conversations of Canova reported to the author.

little doubt of this marriage having been arranged with the consent, if not by the advice of *Josephine*, of whom Buonaparte always spoke with respect and deference. As the Ex-Empress was a warm patroness of the sculptor, allusions to her were not unfrequent. One day, when on the preceding evening Canova had been to visit by invitation, at her retreat, — " Well," said Napoleon, abruptly changing the conversation, as was his common custom, and addressing him in Italian, " You were yesterday at *Compeigne*."—In continuing the subject, the former happened to repeat with approbation some remarks made by Josephine. This seemed highly to gratify the latter, who replied, " *Donna è da mente, come la vostra, di un secolo ;*"—" She is a woman with a soul like yours, Canova, such as is seen but once in an age."

The erection of the monument to the memory of *Maria Christina* in 1805, called Canova also a second time to Vienna ; on which occasion he likewise modelled the bust of the Emperor. The journal of his brother who, in the capacity of Secretary,

from 1800 constantly attended him in all his excursions, it would however appear, does not exhibit so brilliant a page during their stay at the imperial court, as when they resided in the capital of the *Usurper*. Albert of Saxony, indeed, the husband of the deceased Archduchess, who at this time paid the sculptor great attention, must be regarded as possessing both taste and feeling, since the subjects at least of the groups in that grand work are said to have been dictated by him; while on the other hand the highest judgment is displayed in reducing to the rules of art the conceptions of another.

With the exception of these distant journies, and a few short intervals of absence in Florence and other parts of Italy, for the space of more than fifteen years, Canova never quitted Rome—constantly occupied in his workshop, where, to use his own words, "his statues were the sole proofs of his civil existence." In speaking thus, his modesty would have endeavoured to conceal the many acts of beneficence

which equally proved his activity in virtue, as the former in professional pursuits. While the one spread his fame over Europe, the other endeared him to his fellow-citizens, more especially artists, who during the privations and misfortunes of that disastrous period were relieved by his bounty, or supported by his employment.

But the times were hastening to an amelioration. The efforts of united nations at length prevailed, and the unanimous wishes of the good, the wise, and the virtuous, were realized in a general peace with its consequent re-establishment of order. The spoils of cities, and the trophies of art, which the tide of conquest had swept in its vortex to one place, by a reflux of the stream were again to be lodged in their ancient seats. This change was productive of a new and arduous, yet pleasing labour to Canova,—for who so fit to superintend the collecting and homeward return of those treasures, as he who of all men could most truly appreciate their value, and who had never ceased to mourn their

departure? Accordingly, one of the first acts of his good old Master's administration, now, after many years of exile and of patient endurance restored to his throne, was to invest Canova with the proper authority, as his accredited functionary to the allied powers, for the purpose of reclaiming such works of art as had formerly pertained to the patrimony of the Church.

Paris, in 1815, shewed an aspect very opposite to that worn in 1810, and Canova was thus called to support a very different character in a scene so changed. Whether in his own profession however, or as the trusted agent of his sovereign, he equally evinced the possession of superior powers. To the witlings of the world, genius has long been a standing jest, as if its retired habits and honourable feelings were inconsistent with judicious management of affairs. In conducting the common-place concerns of life with fairness and candour, it may indeed be sometimes disappointed, but never over-reached; since, though not ignorant that others employ means less

ingenuous, it indignantly rejects such artifices. Canova only adds another to the many instances of talents which, nurtured and chiefly exercised in the solitude of study, have yet shone with conspicuous lustre in the direction of public and important transactions. Nor let this be deemed an attempt to surround his character with adventitious or unmerited splendour. The part which he had now to sustain was equally new and arduous,—where so many contending interests were to be reconciled in favour of a power, one of the weakest—and claiming the most valuable of the objects in dispute. Russia, which had no arts to suffer in adorning the car of invasion, and the Germans, who possessed comparatively little of tasteful ornament capable of tempting the hand of the *spoiler*, were as usual the most clamorous in their demands. They insisted on treating France as a conquered country, and on the propriety of partitioning her plunder. The Apollo or the Transfiguration had thus a greater chance to visit the Danube or the

Tanais, than to repose on the shores of the Tiber. In opposing the individual claims of Rome, Austria also enlarged on the rights of what she was pleased to term her Italian provinces, many of whose treasures, by the bye, have since found their way to Vienna. France, on the contrary, was naturally inclined to retain what she already possessed; nor was there wanting much of intrigue of a less obvious character. The British alone seemed to be impartial, and without preference to watch over the interests of all; or, to give Canova's own emphatic language, *were the Patriots of Europe* [1]. By a proper union of deference to the opinions of the illustrious personages with whom he now mingled, and of firmness in urging the just pretensions of his country, he was finally enabled most completely to accomplish the object of his mission. The exertions made by him at this time, and the anxious zeal which he displayed, are not indeed to be described, but they ought to survive in the

[1] "Si trovano i defensori dell' Europa."

memories of the grateful Romans. Deprived of the riches restored through his endeavours, their capital would have lost its noblest ornaments, and must have ceased to be, in the most intellectual sense, "the City of the soul [1]." If disembodied *spirits* regard from their bright abodes the transitory occurrences of the world they once adorned, it must have rejoiced the mighty minds whose creations they are—thus to behold the assembled states of Europe contending for the glory of possessing those emanations of genius, in breathing canvas, or animated marble, which have stamped even their mortal existence with immortality.

The important commission with which he had been entrusted being thus happily effected, his attention was next directed to the accomplishment of a design long me-

[1] Cicognara—Paravia—Falier mention the great exertions of Canova on this occasion. The first, however, is ungratefully silent on the support received from the British authorities, of which he must have been well informed, and which the Pope himself acknowledged.

ditated. This was a visit to the British metropolis, where he accordingly arrived towards the conclusion of the same autumn. Of the advantages and the pleasure derived from this journey, Canova ever spoke in terms of the most gratified recollection. The mansions of wealth and of rank were opened in emulous hospitality to welcome the illustrious stranger; while the friendly connections formed with several of our most distinguished artists and men of talent, constituted sources of more permanent gratulation. He had also long cherished an increasing admiration for the few remains of art in Italy, ascribable to the era of Phidias. Even from his youth, the lofty union of grandeur and of truth in the conception,—the harmonious accordance of an execution broad and vigorous, yet flowing, natural, and unexaggerated, which distinguished this epoch, had arrested his discerning judgment, and had been followed as models, while the age generally was alike incapable of feeling, as of imitating these beauties. The discovery and re-

moval of the *Elgin marbles*, therefore, the first undoubted specimens of that school, had excited no ordinary curiosity. Every intelligence which the restrictions of war permitted to reach his place of abode, was eagerly collected; and to him as the most enlightened of his countrymen on that subject, *Visconti* addressed his dissertations on those highly but justly celebrated sculptures. On first viewing these remains,—and they formed the first subject of inquiry as they continued to be of reiterated study, no visible impression was for some time perceivable. As he proceeded in their examination, his countenance began to assume the same glowing intelligence, usually exhibited when his mind was engaged in a profound and pleasing investigation connected with professional pursuits, and his manner to express the most intense interest. He seemed as if restoring in fancy, the broken surfaces and mutilated fragments to their original perfection,—dimmed indeed to others, but to his eye still plainly discernible. These works he ever

afterwards mentioned with enthusiastic—almost devotional admiration, stating, that from them, the principles which for half a century had guided his practice, had received illustration and improvement;—and that in the productions executed subsequently to his visit to the British metropolis, the real connoisseur would perceive traits of vigour and of nature superior to all his former efforts [1].

In his present Majesty, the fine arts have ever found an enlightened and generous patron. From his earliest accession to power, their best interests, no less than those of literature, have been advanced by his private munificence, and by the judicious measures of his government. From a Sovereign thus capable of appreciating, and disposed to reward talents, Canova might have naturally anticipated a gracious reception. Nor were these hopes disappointed. His Majesty, then Regent, honoured the sculptor in various conferences; gave a commission for one of his most beau-

[1] Letters and Conversations of Canova, Cicognara.

tiful groups; and, farther, presented him with a gold box set with brilliants, containing besides a gift worthy of the donor. As an especial mark of favour, he was also made the bearer of private letters from the Britannic, to his own Sovereign, the aged Pontiff[1]. Canova was a man of the utmost simplicity, candour, and independence of mind. The manner in which he always extolled the fine taste, sound judgment, and extensive information, that distinguish his present Majesty in matters relative to the arts, can therefore only be ascribed to a love of truth, and to no motives of flattery or views of interest. He has also been heard to observe, and he had enjoyed frequent intercourse with most, if not all the crowned heads of Europe—"that he knew no Sovereign in whose address were more happily combined, the suavity of the amiable man, and the dignity of the great Monarch."

[1] Paravia is greatly delighted with the marks of esteem received by Canova in England, and mentions the notice taken of him by the King, the very last in his list of honours, and as "le comble de tout."

Rome was destined once more to view a scene which recalled the pomp of her former triumphs, when amid the trophies of less permanent conquest, the same productions of perfect art moved in glorious procession through her streets;—once more herechoes repeated the hymn of gratulation, addressed to those bright images of energies long since passed away,—as these violated spoils were again borne within her walls to their well-known seats in the Capitol and the Vatican. The rejoicings which took place on this occasion, were renewed with demonstrations of augmented joy, when on the day following Canova himself arrived, like the tutelary genius of his country's yet surviving fame, and invested with nobler — because guiltless honour, than any of her ancient conquerors[1]. Nor did such eminent services pass undistinguished, either by the gratitude of his fellow-citizens, or by the favour of his Prince. Immediately on his return he was named,

[1] His triumphal entry, for such it may be called, took place on the 5th of January 1816.

" President of the Commission for the purchase of objects of art,"—as also " of the Academy of Archaiology," having been formerly declared President of " St Luke's." By order of the Holy Father, in full consistory, his name was also inscribed *in* the " golden volume of the Capitol," — the sculptor of Possagno being enrolled among the Roman Patricians, by the title of *Marquis of Ischia ;* and to this dignity an annual pension of 3000 crowns was assigned [1]. In thus substantiating in the estimate of the world, the patent of nobility already stamped by nature,—as a signal mark of respect, the Pope himself with his own hand wrote the diploma of rank so deservedly merited. Of the sum attached to his Marquisate, Canova never converted to his own use the smallest portion ; the whole, as will hereafter appear, being expended in a manner

[1] About L.625 per annum. The book which contains the names of the Roman nobles is preserved among the archives of the Capitol, and is termed " Libro d'oro del Campidoglio."

that did equal honour to his judgment, as to his generosity.

We now behold the humble and single-minded artist, thus elevated to a rank highly distinguished in worldly grandeur, and still more celebrated as the first in one,—and that one of the noblest departments in the empire of mind. The same simplicity, however, the same unassuming modesty, to the end of life continued to characterize his sentiments, and to mark his deportment. Religion—pure, mild, and rational, possessed in truth the deepest influence over the heart of Canova. This amiable and enlightened feeling, united with natural humility and gratitude, led him to attribute every vicissitude which he had experienced in his own fortune—or witnessed in the fate of those great personages with whom he had conversed, solely to the dispensations of an all-wise and good Providence. Those changes, indeed, which had so recently and so powerfully affected the potentates of Europe, had not hastened his greatness; on the contrary, had he been

ambitious of honours, he might have commanded the highest in the gift of him, who so long had held in iron grasp the destinies of nations. His patriotic moderation rejected the proffered exaltation. He now enjoyed the proud consciousness of serving his country restored to independence, and had the satisfaction of receiving the rewards of these services from the hand of a Sovereign, to whom he had previously been attached by private friendship,—whose misfortunes he had never ceased to lament, —whose return filled him with joy [1]. His temper of mind, no less than the stupendous events themselves so far beyond mortal foresight or agency, as well as the pleasure derived from their happy termination, thus disposed Canova to pious impressions, and he proposed to eternize both

[1] Quel sentimento di una viva riconoscenza al suo Principe—quel devoto affetto che il legava alla sagra persona di *Pio VII.*,—e sue proprie fece le sventure di quel Pontifice, e la accompagnò co' sospiri co' desiderj e col pianto nel lungo ed onorato esiglio, &c. *Paravia.—Falier.—Monaco, &c.*

the transactions and his gratitude, by a gratuitous effort of his skill in erecting a colossal statue of Religion—one of the most noble monuments of his powers, and among the grandest designs yet produced by modern art. Already the model filled Italy with admiration of its excellence,—the enormous block of marble was placed,—and the chisel of the sculptor suspended over it, only delayed to call the mass into life, till the proper authorities should determine what site was to receive the precious offering. Will it be credited, that indecision of this point, through the mutual jealousies and vanity of churchmen, deprived Rome and the arts of a present so magnificent! yet such was the fact. The artist himself would have preferred the majestic expanse of St Peter's; or rather the glorious circle of the Pantheon, where this personification of Catholicism might rise in the centre, while the memorials of departed genius, in busts, statues, and monuments, should adorn the splendid periphery. But designs thus cal-

culated alike to aggrandise the capital,—to advance the arts,—to honour religion, were rendered abortive by the difficulties of reconciling—not the contending interests, but the rival pretensions of those concerned; or by a passion more disgraceful *still*—envy of the reputation which an *old* man would derive from a statue recording his virtues and his misfortunes. Cardinals and Princes from such motives, combined in throwing obstacles in the way of completing a work destined to commemorate the return from banishment of the Head of their church!

Except a copy, in proportions somewhat larger than nature [1], this magnificent statue thus never advanced beyond the model,—which is thirty palms, or upwards of twenty feet in altitude. Sacerdotal vestments clothe in simple sublimity the mystic form; a tiara bearing in front divine symbols covers the head; the right hand is elevated, and pointing towards heaven, as the only object worthyof fixing our regards; against

[1] Executed in marble for Lord Brownlow.

the left arm rests the standard of the cross, while the hand supports a medallion of St Peter and St Paul, placed on a column inscribed with the Decalogue, and various passages of scripture. That the original intention of paying a tribute of respect to the Pontiff, to whom he was attached by so many ties, might not be altogether frustrated, the Artist caused to be executed a masterly engraving of this production with the following inscription: *Pro felici reditu Pii VII. Pont. Max. Religionis formam, sua impensa in marmore exculpendam, Antonius Canova libens fecit et dedicavit.*

But a memorial thus transitory, though it might evidence the sincerity of private gratitude, could not satisfy those ardent sentiments of devotion which glowed within the bosom of Canova. He resolved to consecrate not one statue, but to devote the whole of his fortune, the declining years of life, and the last energies of genius to the cause of religion. His adopted country—the nurse of his youthful powers

—the scene of his maturer triumphs, had been deprived of his generous offer; yet, though filled, as appears from his epistolary correspondence, with sorrow and regret, his mind was not depressed, nor his resolution discouraged, by a disappointment so unforeseen. Recollection now reverted to the remote place of his nativity, and he resolved, by erecting there, if not one of the grandest, at least one of the most elegant temples in modern Italy, to manifest his piety, advance the arts, and dignify, no less than enrich the humble village where he had first drawn breath. In this noble edifice it was proposed to renew the beauties and the sublimity both of the Pantheon and of the Parthenon,—remains exhibiting in its greatest purity the science of Greece and of Rome [1]. It was to prove an asylum not only for the statue now described, but was to be adorned with many more of his works; and within its sacred precincts the ashes of the founder were to repose.

[1] The Parthenon of Athens, built in the age of Pericles,—the Pantheon at Rome in that of Augustus.

Circumstances, which it is here unnecessary to enumerate, occasioned the commencing of this magnificent enterprise to be delayed for more than two years. During that interval however, Canova was constantly intent on the proper means of carrying the design into execution, and, as is evident from private letters, his determination and his motives were daily acquiring fresh strength. In the present concourse of workmen—in the sums now to be expended, and still more in the future resort of travellers, he contemplated a fruitful and never-failing source of prosperity to his native Possagno [1]. Patriotism equally enlightened as benevolent thus conduced in recommending an undertaking which, notwithstanding the piety of the intention, might otherwise have been deemed merely a splendid inutility. At length, in the summer of 1819, Canova arrived in the secluded scene of his intended operations. Workmen soon after be-

[1] Falier—Cicognara—Paravia—Letters of Canova.

gan to assemble, with whom were joined a multitude of labourers and assistants from the adjacent district, to aid in forming with the utmost dispatch, the preliminary excavations. On the 8th of July, the whole number being assembled, these artificers were sumptuously entertained by their generous employer, who on this occasion presided in person at one of the numerous tables. At the close of the entertainment, with an amiable mixture of feeling and of taste, he distributed from his own hand presents to the young shepherdesses and peasant girls of the neighbouring hamlets, who had mingled in the festivities of the day, and had even previously joined in the less agreeable occupation of removing the earth, voluntarily assisting in what they deemed a pious *la*bour. It was a most interesting sight to view these rural beauties, dressed in the gay and picturesque costume of the Venetian *contadine*—their sunny looks brightened with pleasure, advancing in long procession to where Canova was expecting

them. Each as she passed his seat, received from his own hand the valued gift—and blushing her inaudible thanks, or lisping in modest diffidence her "*grazie Signor mi*," mingled with an equally delighted crowd, of fathers and mothers, brothers or lovers, who were standing around to admire and to congratulate these objects of their affection. Upwards of L.400 [1] were thus expended by their noble-minded countryman;—and from the surrounding happiness, the spectator must have often turned to gaze on him who had created it. Canova's countenance seemed to reflect the united enjoyment of all; it beamed with the conscious triumph of doing good; and his eye glistened with the dew of genuine — of unostentatious benevolence. Often has he been heard to declare, that this was "one of the few days of real existence." "Yet," he would continue, "how little did it cost me to make so many human beings happy;—after all, the true va-

[1] 2000 crowns.

lue of money is to be estimated from the *quantity* of happiness which it may purchase for others:—in this light riches are indeed desirable."

Canova being in haste to depart for Rome, the first Sunday, which happened to be the 11th of the month, subsequent to this festivity was appointed for the religious ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the future edifice [1]. On this occasion an immense concourse, not only from the surrounding districts, but even from Venice, hastened to Possagno. After having assisted in the offices of devotion, in the humble erection which his splendid structure was to supersede, the sculptor, habited in his robes as a Knight of Christ, and bearing the *insignia* of various other orders, headed the procession, accompanied by the ecclesiastical representative of the Bishop, whom indisposition prevented from attending in

[1] The excavations for the foundation were twice cut, the site first pitched upon being afterwards judged too low.

person. Behind followed the numerous workmen, and others connected with the undertaking. Amid the joyful acclamations of the surrounding multitude—the sounds of solemn music—and the prayers of the officiating priests, the rites were consummated. Whatever might have been the particular creed of individuals—all must have felt their hearts elevated in unison with the grandeur of the general result. Around, on the green declivities of the romantic hills, were ranged thousands of every condition, sex and age, carrying into a scene of otherwise deep solitude the powerful animation of religious feeling. Beyond on one hand, rose in azure distance the majestic Alps; on the other, the Adriatic diffused its broad mirror, on the bright surface of which, remote towers and islands shewed like dark specks, yet the eye perceived no borne; —appropriate site for His temple whose throne is space, and whose power is omnipotence! How affecting, also, was that moral sublimity which arises from contem-

plating the fortunes and the energies of man! The generation had not yet passed away that beheld the mover of these events commence his career among the obscurest inhabitants of these very solitudes; the noblest of distinctions had *raised him* by virtuous exertion to dignity and wealth; now, amid the ever-remembered scenes of early days, he was about to consecrate talents and riches to the glory of his God, and to the service of his species.

From the moment of its first foundation, the erection was urged forward without intermission. Every succeeding autumn found Canova at Possagno encouraging the workmen by honorary medals and pecuniary rewards. During these different visits considerable alterations on the original plan of the edifice were introduced, particularly in 1821, when an additional range of columns was added to the portico, and other improvements accomplished, which, without impairing the beautiful simplicity of the ancient temple, rendered its form more commodious as adapted to a Christian

church. The anxiety entertained for the completion of a structure which, seemingly forgetful of his other labours, the artist almost appears to have regarded, as the sole connecting tie between his memory and posterity, is still more forcibly expressed in the following extract from his will, written long before his decease: "To the honour, and to the probity of my brother, and sole heir, I confide the obligation of continuing, completing, and embellishing in all its parts, without the least reservation, and in the shortest time possible, the *Temple of Possagno*, according to the plans established by me and communicated to him. To which object, if the funds appointed prove insufficient, all my effects and property are to be sold, till the necessary sums be obtained." The building on which such unwearied attention was thus bestowed is imposing, both in dimensions and from its situation, on the summit of a gentle elevation. The body of the structure is circular, with a noble portico of the purest Grecian Doric, and the pediment, when the whole is terminated, will be adorned with

relievos from sacred history—modelled among the last works of their immortal author [1].

Neither length of time, nor remoteness of site, nor immense expenditure could divert Canova from a purpose, which motives so generous and so noble had concurred to originate. The last consideration, indeed, kept his mind in constant agitation; and though he had not entered upon the design rashly, or without due reflection, he soon found that additional resources would be wanting to meet the exigencies thus created. Hence, ever intent upon the object of his pious wishes, we behold him in the waining years of life, with a shattered constitution, and exhausted strength, eagerly undertaking fresh commissions, engaging in new works in groups, statues, monuments, and labouring with all the ardour of unimpaired youth. Exertions both of body and spirit thus in advanced age,

[1] For a more detailed account of this temple, see *Crico's* "Viagetto Pittorico da Venezia a Possagno;" or the plates and letter-press description, in folio, by *Lucciolli*.

renewed with juvenile activity, could not fail of proving injurious to a frame delicate from the beginning; nor is there any thing improbable in the apprehensions of his friends, that the close of existence was thus accelerated.

During the period intervening between the commencement of these splendid operations at Possagno, and the time of his decease, several of Canova's most beautiful productions were either wholly executed or finally perfected. Among the chief of these may be mentioned,—the group of Mars and Venus,—the statue of Washington,—the colossal figure of Pius VI.,—the Pietà,—the St John,—the recumbent Magdalen, &c. In the first of these works, the design was suggested by his Majesty, by whom the group was commissioned at the time of Canova's visit to London. In realizing the beautiful idea of *Venus* with the attributes of Concord seducing from his stern resolves the ferocious *Mars*, as commemorative of the benign influence of Peace succeeding the horrors of War,—

the Sculptor has not equalled the originality of the thought. He has in fact produced little more than a *replica* of the earlier work of Venus and Adonis; the grouping, the attitudes, the expression are almost identical;—the character of Mars is alone diversified, yet the form of the God is not equal to that of the Shepherd. The figure of Venus indeed, is transcendently lovely, while in the perfection of mechanical execution, and in the lustre of exquisite finish, this work, by the Artist's own confession, is not excelled by any production of his hand. The noble statue of *Washington*, for the Senate-house of New York, is interesting, as the first piece of sculpture executed in the old, and publicly commissioned in the new world; thus uniting by the fame of one individual, the arts of both hemispheres. The intrinsic beauty equally recommends the work to notice. Seated, and arrayed in the imposing garb of an ancient Roman, the Liberator of America is inscribing on a tablet his last instructions,—" George Washington to the

United States," appearing already written. With the antique majesty of costume, the mild and dignified benevolence of the countenance finely accords,—telling more plainly than the sword and sceptre on which he tramples, that the happiness of nations—not the aggrandisement of an individual, urged him to unsheath the one, and to reject the other. The kneeling figure of *Pius VI.*, which now adorns the crypt in St Peter's, is of the very first excellence, combining delicacy with force of manual dexterity, and grandeur with natural expression. This was one of the works mentioned by the sculptor during his last illness; he regretted the absence of some additional touches, and that he could not place it in the appointed situation. The *Pietà*, or group of the Dead Saviour and two Maries, was intended for the high altar of the new church, but unfortunately never advanced beyond the model. It is remarkable as one of those happy instances, where genius seems to operate as if by inspiration, and to create without ef-

fort. The conception is most felicitous; and though involving the profoundest principles of art, the composition proceeded with the most amazing rapidity, neither admitting pause, nor suffering alteration. The artist had returned from Venice; and while it was imagined that he was yet reposing from the fatigues of the journey, Rome was astonished by the exhibition of a work which, from its perfection and its science, might have been judged the labour of long study and repeated experiments.

The works thus succinctly mentioned constitute only a small portion of those passed over in silence; but matters of more melancholy interest now press upon the attention. The *latest* performance that issued from the hand of the Sculptor, and which was not long finished when his energies subsided for ever under the pressure of a last illness is—a colossal bust of an intimate friend [1]. This circumstance may excuse a momentary glance to merits in a department hitherto unnoticed. Canova, like all great

[1] The Count Cicognara.

artists, excelled in portraits; and strictly speaking, though these did not enter into his range of professional pursuits, yet individual likenesses from his chisel, in monuments, statues and busts properly so called, are by no means rare. In this branch he possessed the true ideal and poetic feeling—that exaltation of mere material art, which in the features gives back the impress and character of the soul within. Of this excellence his own head is a wonderful example—while in other respects, it is also one of the most beautiful colossal portraits ever sculptured. Many attempts by others had previously been made: still in these something was wanting: the lineaments were there, but the animating principle—the spiritual intelligence that gave dignity to features which though fine were not otherwise striking, had escaped. Hence he conceived the idea of representing himself at the moment, when the soul kindling with divine enthusiasm is following out some noble conception. This design completely succeeded;—the mind of Ca-

nova could alone be sculptured by its kindred hand [1].

The winter of 1821–22, the last of his life, was passed by Canova in even more than ordinary diligence. Numerous works were finally completed, some commenced, and many merely designed. Among other labours, he was at this time engaged on a stupendous equestrian statue of Ferdinand, the reigning sovereign of Naples. This piece was to be of bronze, and the model

[1] Of all the portraits of Canova, examined by the author, our own Jackson's comes nearest to the intellectual character of the bust in question,—and consequently to the true expression of the individual.—*Faber's*, which has been so much celebrated on the Continent, is brisk and lively, more like the character of his own countrymen, than the sedate and benevolent enthusiasm of the Italian sculptor. The medal from which the head in this volume is taken, is also a copy of the colossal bust, with such alterations as the lapse of time rendered necessary. This medallion was considered as the most striking likeness of Canova in the latter part of his life: from it the original drawing was carefully executed by the author's own hand, and to his sketch every justice has been done by the engraver.

of the horse being then finished, it was requisite to repair to that city, in the month of May, in order to superintend the construction of the wax-moulds preparatory to the fusion of the metal [1]. The climate of this part of Italy had always proved uncongenial; while through continued application and occasional attacks of slight indisposition, his frame was already debilitated. A general tendency to disorder, especially in the functions of the stomach, was thus in-

[1] This, with the exception of the *modelled* equestrian statue of Napoleon, is the largest work of the kind in Europe; but a fatality seems to have attended these productions of Canova. The first was not completed when the fortunes of Napoleon were reversed,—his throne was ascended by Lewis XVIII., and his steed, modelled by Canova, was more lately mounted by Charles III. of Naples; while the second never proceeded further than the model of the horse. Before the author left Rome in 1823, the Court of Naples had invited a general competition of artists to complete the latter work, the best model of Ferdinand's figure to be preferred; but as one of the competitors, and an intimate friend, pertinently inquired,—Adesso ove si troveranno i guidici onesti vale a dire,—liberi?

duced, and he returned languid and disheartened, with strong indications of what is technically named *dyspepsia*. In Rome, his drooping spirits seemed to revive; and during the three subsequent months, though far from well, he was enabled with little intermission to pursue all professional avocations. Early in September, he set out on the annual visit to Possagno, hoping to derive benefit from the exhilaration of the journey, and from the change of air. These expectations were the more sanguine, that his indisposition had been ascribed to languor arising from the extreme heat of the season, the summer having continued unusually sultry throughout Italy.

On the 17th of the same month our invalid reached the place of destination,—but alas! health was not in the breeze of his native fields. Indeed the malady had gained ground during the journey, which, notwithstanding weakness, had been prosecuted in the usual hurried manner; for regretting the time occupied in travelling as lost, he constantly moved with the utmost

expedition. Here the friends who had not seen him since the preceding autumn, were but too sensible of his attenuated form, and generally altered appearance—symptoms of decay, less obvious to those who had daily enjoyed his converse. But he seemed desirous of diverting his own as well as the attention of others from the subject, replying to anxious inquirers—*Adesso starò bene*, "I shall presently be well"—with a gentle pressure of the hand, or a melancholy smile, the unconscious feebleness of which was inexpressibly affecting, and forbade indulgence of the hope it was kindly intended to convey. During the whole of his stay in the country he remained always active, superintending the builders, making short excursions, and taking the waters of *Recoaro*, from which he had formerly experienced relief[1]. Towards the end of the month, his health ap-

[1] Among others he visited the Count Collalto, and the Abbate Boschieri, Principal of the College at Treviso, &c. Recoaro is at no great distance from Possagno.

pearing on the whole to be improved, he began to think of returning to Rome. Preparatory to this, he resolved to spend the first of October at the villa Falier,—a spot endeared by youthful recollections, and by a whole age of friendship. Here a few friends had assembled to meet him;—the day passed in the most agreeable manner, Canova's cheerful conversation diffusing a charm around which, with his looks of renovated strength, rendered him the centre of more than ordinary attraction. The events of his juvenile years were recalled with animated pleasure. He fondly lingered in every favourite haunt, where half a century before had been indulged the first romantic dreams of youth,—and it was on this day, as formerly mentioned, that he expressed so deep an interest in viewing the works of his early master Torretto [1]. If these incidents appear trivial, let it be remembered, that they mark the last day of health and of enjoyment to him, who

[1] Falier—Paravia. See Chap. III.

was never indifferent to the welfare and the happiness of others. The traveller, conscious that a mournful issue awaits the termination of the journey, may be pardoned if he linger by the way—if he ascend every elevation which allures with the promise of less gloomy prospects,—or often stop to admire the flowers that bloom in his path: So also, the biographer of the virtuous dead, will naturally wish to dwell on the bright activities of existence—to expatiate on the fleeting hours, which still connect his subject with the annals of time,—and to retain, as it were, the pure example in the world.

These symptoms of convalescence proved transitory and delusive. Canova had scarcely bid adieu to the Signor Falier, when his disorder returned with augmented violence [1]; he nevertheless persisted in the determination of leaving Possagno, and on the 4th arrived in Venice, with the intention of remaining some days before finally

[1] It is even stated, that Canova with difficulty reached Possagno, although only at a short distance.

departing for Rome. But here the progress of disease could no longer be withstood; and having retired to the house of his friend *Francesconi*, on the right of the Piazza di San Marco, whose hospitable roof he constantly preferred to more splendid mansions, he was at length obliged to take to his bed, which hitherto had been strenuously avoided. On this day was also written the last note ever signed by his hand;—it was addressed to the friend whose bust is precious as the last creation of his chisel, and runs thus: "My health continues as usual—perhaps is worse than it was: for a few days I thought it improving, but I was mistaken: it is to be hoped the journey to Rome may restore me. I would fain embrace you once more [1]."

With the lapse of time, the disorder continued gradually to increase, the stomach refusing to retain the smallest portion of aliment; nor could the powers of medicine, administered with the address of

[1] Count Cicognara, to whom this note is addressed, was then near Vicenza.

science and the tenderness of friendship, allay an internal convulsive affection, which greatly added to the sufferings of the patient [1]. The pulse, however, continued regular, and the senses unaffected to the last; while amid this complicated distress, Canova was never heard to complain, but exerted himself in calming the alarm, and soothing the grief of the weeping attendants by whom he was surrounded. Nor was it in the chamber of the sick alone, that a feeling of the deepest sorrow prevailed; it affectingly declared his worth, to behold a crowd of all ranks besetting the entrance to the house where he lay, eager to learn the state of his health. Such were his perfect calmness and resignation, that the danger appeared not so imminent as it really was, and even by his most intimate friends, hopes of recovery were entertained, to use their

[1] Canova's principal medical attendants were Signors Aglietti and Zannini, both eminent in their profession, and his intimate friends, the former particularly so.

own expression, "*quasi al ultimo sospiro*," almost to the latest breath. When at length it was deemed necessary to put him in mind of arranging his affairs, the announcement was received with the utmost composure. His earthly concerns were declared to have been long put in order, and he now only reminded his brother that the full completion of the Temple at Possagno must be provided for. He also mentioned certain works in terms which shewed that the hope of renown is not disregarded by, or may even be grateful to the departing spirit; in particular, he rejoiced that in his latest, improvement might be traced, and that all those for which money had been received in anticipation were finished. This latter circumstance seemed to shed unmingled satisfaction over his deathbed, and to it he more than once reverted.

The morning of the 12th passed as usual without any very apparent alteration, but towards noon the disorder evidently threatened a fatal crisis, and the strength of the

sufferer appeared to be rapidly decaying. It was therefore judged highly expedient to prepare his mind for the last change, and Signor Aglietti was requested to undertake this melancholy duty. Canova received that declaration of his friend and physician which forbade all hope, with the most unmoved serenity and pious resignation. "*Ecco*," he merely replied, "*noi veniamo a questo mundo a far la nostra rivista—e poi—sic transit gloria mundi.*"—"We come into this world to play our part—and then—vanishes the glory of the scene;"—after a pause, adding in a tone of joyful confidence—"*Beato, beato che l'ha fatto bene*,"—"Thrice happy he who has performed it well." He then confessed himself with the deepest contrition, and afterwards made a second verbal codicil to his will, again enforcing the continuance and completion of the Church at Possagno [1]. This was at five o'clock; and in the course of the evening the last and most solemn

[1] To this codicil, Aglietti and Arrigoni, and Signor Gamba were witnesses: being reduced to writing, it has already been quoted.

rites of the Catholic communion were administered, in which he participated with a sincerity and an ardour of devotion, which edified, while it melted even to tears all present. The soul now loosened from all earthly ties, was absorbed in holy meditation; at the same time the bodily strength was so entirely exhausted, that scarcely a movement indicated the presence of life; —yet the lethargy affected only the vital functions, the powers of the mind remained unimpaired, as was attested by the short sentences of lofty piety, or of practical virtue, which were occasionally addressed to the friends who ministered at his couch. Of these sentences it was observed that he more than once repeated: "*Prima di tutto convien fare il proprio dovere;—ma prima di tutto,*"—"First of all we ought to do our own duty;"—"but," added he in the last repetition with surprising emphasis, "but first of all." When entreated to take a few drops of restorative, he replied that it was in vain, but immediately subjoined in the kindest manner, *Date pure, che così*

mi prolungherò il ben di star con voi;—"Yet give it me, that so I may prolong the happiness of being with you;" and to those who moistened his parched lips, he gently said, "*Buono, buonissimo—ma è inutile:*" "'Tis kind, very kind—but it is vain." During the last half hour of mortal existence, those looks of languor which shew that animation is—yet is not, brightened into sacred effulgence,—and the countenance became radiant with sublime expression, as if the soul, cheered by heavenly influence, had collected fresh energies as it approached the bosom of its God. Thus must he have looked, when conceiving his pure and perfect works;—but in such an awful pause, even the immortal light of genius must have been dimmed, had not the reflection of a well-spent life, added to its failing fires the never-fading brightness of Christian hope. His sorrowing friends were still standing around in deep emotion, when his dying lips moved with rapid earnestness, and the words, *anima pura e bella*—"pure and amiable spirit," were several

times distinctly pronounced in quick succession. These were the last audible sounds, and he calmly sunk to rest, without a struggle,—almost without a sigh.

Thus, having nearly completed his 65th year, seventeen minutes before *eight* on the morning of Sunday, October 13.—" the angelic heart of Canova palpitated for the last time, and his celestial mind was closed for ever to its lofty conceptions [1]."

The day following, on opening the body, the proximate cause of death was ascertained to have been a paralysis of the stomach, promoted by the scirrhous state of the pylorus, by which the passage of the aliments into the intestinal canal was almost entirely prevented,—and further aggravated by a derangement of the bilious system, the biliary sack being decayed, and the ducts everywhere filled with *calculi* of various

[1] " Il cuore angelico di Canova palpitò per l'ultima volta, e la di lui mente divina si chiuse per sempre a' suoi sublimi concepimenti." Gazzetta di Venezia, October 14. 1822, written by Zannini.

sizes. The lungs were also found to be slightly adhering to the pleura. The more remote origin of disease seemed to have been laid in too close an application to professional pursuits; this evidently appeared from an external depression of the right breast, occasioned by bearing against the head of the *trapano*,—an instrument of iron constantly employed by sculptors in working. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the arduous exertions of Canova, particularly in his youth, when by personal efforts alone, he accomplished the most extensive works, finally shortened his life, and prematurely deprived the world of his rare talents [1].

The body was afterwards enclosed in a coffin of lead, and the whole placed in an external covering of larch, simply but richly ornamented. Preparatory also to interment at Possagno, their place of final re-

[1] The original report, the length of which prevents its insertion, is signed by Drs Aglietti and Zannini, and by Surgeons Pezzi and Rima, all well known as the most distinguished professional men in Venice.

pose, Venice decreed to honour these remains in public and solemn obsequies. Accordingly, on the third morning after decease, the bier was conducted to the Cathedral by the eleves and professors of the Academy,—who alone were deemed privileged to fulfil the hallowed duties of relationship to him, whose life had been devoted to the arts, who had left neither children nor pupils, yet whose scholars might be said to compose the surviving generation of artists. In this venerable pile, one of the earliest efforts of modern art, the relics of its great restorer were supported on a temporary cataphalque, and the Patriarch in person celebrated the religious service [1]. At these mournful solemnities,—the Governor, the members of the Municipality, the Associates of the Institute and of the Athenæo,—all, in fine, distinguished in arts, in letters, or in rank, officially attended; while the frequently moistened eye proclaimed that this was no

[1] Giovanni Ladislao Pyrker, Patriarch of Venice, was also the private friend of the sculptor.

heartless ceremony. The multitude of all ranks—occupying not only the broad nave and darkened corridores of St Mark's, but even filling the wide piazza, stood reverently bending and uncovered as the coffin was slowly borne along. Over this vast concourse prevailed the stillest silence—broken only by the awful pealing of the requiem, or the deep whisper of the response. Each in the common deprivation seemed to mourn a private calamity; and in contemplating the intrinsic—the inexclusive glory of departed talent, all appeared to be impressed with feelings of sublimity like the sacredness of devotion, that equalized distinction, yet elevated—not depressed the moral grandeur of humanity.

To the demonstrations of general respect, the Venetian artists were farther desirous of adding the tribute of their peculiar reverence and individual sorrow. The procession therefore continuing its progress by water, the remains of their revered master were placed in the great hall of the Academy. This spacious apartment was

crowded with an assembly of many hundreds, the most distinguished in Venice. The walls were hung with black, and around were suspended drawings or engravings of Canova's works,—so numerous that they might well have been deemed the labours of successive periods, and of a race of sculptors,—not the productions of one short life—the creations of a single mind. These were distinctly illuminated, while the central space remained in shadowy gloom,—a solitary funereal torch placed at the head of the bier alone throwing its solemn and emblematic fires around. This lonely light burned on an antique bronze, that for many centuries of freedom and of empire, had been employed to collect the votes in the grand council of the Venetian Senate. Among other memorials of her ancient greatness, this had been preserved from the withering grasp of foreign despotism and unsullied by profaner service, until it thus graced the obsequies of him, who in his own has bequeathed to Venice a glory of which she can never be despoil-

ed. Surrounded by objects thus affectingly connected with the present and the past, the President delivered an oration in honour of the deceased, fraught with the noble eloquence of truth. He spoke of his matchless talents,—enumerated his splendid performances,—extolled his meritorious exertions; but when, in describing the amiable qualities of his heart, he touched upon his constancy and sincerity in friendship,—unable to proceed, the speaker paused, overcome with emotion. What a pause was this!—One spontaneous, and universal burst of responsive feeling supplied the void which eloquence could not fill, and deeply proclaimed the accordant sorrow of the sympathising auditory.—Shade of Canova! In this hour so glorious to thy memory, thou didst rejoice, that even thy transcendant genius was forgotten, and thy virtues alone remembered. How truly great,—how sacred is his renown, whose powers the sage contemplates with admiration; and on whose grave the Christian drops the pious tear immingled with

the bitterness of doubt,—unchecked by the sigh of regret.

The day was far advanced, when the beloved remains were finally consigned to a deputation of ecclesiastics from Possagno; and darkness closed around before they had passed the peaceful waters of the Adriatic. "The hour of nine has struck," thus writes a distinguished prelate from *Postioma*, the nearest landing place, to a friend in Venice, "and the arrival of the barge is announced. Filled with religious impression I have just visited the bier of the great man: this night the train repose here,—to-morrow they set forward by dawn [1]." Early on the 17th, the procession accordingly reached its destination; and notwithstanding the rain descended in torrents, multitudes joined, particularly on the approach to Possagno. The grief of those simple, but warm-hearted people, was expressed in a manner hardly to be ima-

[1] Letter of Guiseppe Monico, who has since been created Bishop of Possagno, out of respect to the memory of Canova, and esteem for his own merits.

gined by more indurated sensibility: they bathed the herse with tears,—kissed it again and again,—and even threw themselves on their knees before it, as to something consecrated [1]. During the interval, the body lay in state with a pomp which grandeur might envy, and which wealth could not emulate,—in a temple raised by piety with the fruits of genius! The 25th being appointed for the last mournful offices, such numbers, even from remote distances, assembled, that the church could not contain them, and a discourse by the prelate mentioned above was delivered in the open air [2]. It required no efforts of oratory to touch the heart, when evidences of the religion and benevolence of the deceased every where met the view. The magnificent edifice, now nearly terminated,—the flourishing village, already greatly improved,—the individual gratitude of many,—the universal respect of

[1] Monico—Paravia. Private Letters.

[2] On this occasion various inscriptions in Latin were suspended in the church;—their length prevents their insertion.

all, powerfully aided the speaker; and amid the tears of this concourse of his countrymen, the mortal remains of Canova were consigned to their parent dust.

Nor were these passing tributes of esteem, which however sincere only embalmed his memory in the recollection of the living, deemed sufficient. Immediately after his demise, the Venetian artists, as the natural guardians of his fame, entered into arrangements for erecting a cenotaph to Canova; and that it might at once be a most noble monument, as also exclude all jealousy or rivalship, his own model for the tomb of *Titian* was selected [1]. This consists of a pyramid with gradini leading to the entrance, on which are placed colossal figures of the sister arts, Sculpture veiled, entering,—Painting and Architecture following,—a Lion reposing completes the

[1] See Chap. VII. The Venetian Academy also obtained the heart of Canova; and for this precious deposit, an elegant little monument, consisting of a vase of porphyry, with appropriate ornaments and inscriptions, has been erected in the hall of the Palace of the Arts.

group, and above is the bust of the Sculptor. Public subscription presented the only means of carrying this design into execution; and that all might have an opportunity of paying homage to a name which belonged more to Europe than to any particular country, no restrictions were permitted. So liberal were the contributions of all the heads of the European powers, either personal, or by their representatives then sitting in congress at Verona; and so ardent the zeal of all, that the funds were soon in a condition to permit of commencing the work.

But not to Venice alone were public demonstrations of respect confined. Many other cities emulated the pious example; among which Florence and Rome were principally conspicuous. In the latter,—his second country,—his most cherished home, the memory of Canova was revered with corresponding devotion. A statue, as the highest tribute of admiration and of gratitude was decreed to him;—he was proclaimed *perpetual* President of her chief Academy, as if futurity could only

produce one worthy of being second to him;—and his death was subsequently solemnized with such magnificence, that months were required for the preparations. This pomp of public ceremony, however, the splendour of these monumental erections, are less affecting—as they may be deemed more equivocal proofs of worth, than the deep and general impression occasioned by his loss. This feeling extended not merely to Italy—it was diffused throughout Europe [1]. When the melancholy event occurred, the author was in a distant part of Italy; but wherever he went, in whatever society he happened to be placed, all seemed to lament, not only a public benefactor, and a man of genius, but to regret a private and respected friend. *Il buon Canova è morto*—the good Canova is no more, was intelligence first repeated as weighing most heavily on the mind of the speaker—as touching most nearly the affections of the hearers. His name and

[1] Cicognara—Missirini—Paravia — Rossini—Falier, and the public prints of Britain, France, and Germany.

his virtues created a bond of sympathy and of fellowship between those who till that hour had never met, and who parting the next, found in their mutual admiration of these a cause of common esteem. With all their characteristic enthusiasm for eminence in the arts, by which his countrymen are distinguished, they appeared still more to prize his moral excellences. These were indeed of the highest order, and of the most extensive operation —but on this delightful part of our subject, a few observations must suffice. In these respects to enlarge on the merits of Canova would produce a practical comment on the chiefest virtues that adorn our nature; and to particularize individual instances, would be to trace the business of every day of his life [1].

[1] In Venice, during the course of the winter following his death, *two volumes* of poetical tributes, composed on that occasion, were *republished* in a collected form. Of these it was once intended to give some examples, but want of room prevents; and their chief merit, also, with few exceptions, is derived from the subject commemorated.

Benevolence the most generous—the most disinterested, formed a distinguishing trait in the character of our Canova. Nor is this quality the less to be esteemed, that its most beneficial and permanent effects were judiciously limited to those dependant on, or connected with the arts—a class of his countrymen more directly thrown upon his bounty; and whose too often merely nominal gains only seem to exclude them from want, while frequently their keener temperament, or more exquisite sensibility add bitterness to the miseries of poverty. To mitigate these evils, to support aged or decayed artists, to alleviate the miseries of their orphans and widows, to assist and mature the unbroken energies of youthful talent,—all his pensions without reservation, and the greater part of his income, were devoted. Nor was this benevolent disposition the virtue which gives from superabundance; it was a vital and animating principle constantly directing his actions from the moment he had wherewithal to bestow. During the early

progress of the Sculptor, we are informed by the Signor Falier, that he himself was often the instrument through whom the scanty earnings of so much toil—and then even of precarious hope, were divided to the poor of Possagno and of Venice. As the means of doing good augmented, this generosity increased in extent and in activity; he seemed to consider himself only the steward of his wealth; and even some interference, as is observed by Cicognara, was required to prevent him from thus embarrassing his affairs. He might have been among the richest individuals in Italy—he died merely in affluence, and his brother became the distributor, rather than the inheritor of his remaining property. In that dreadful season, when Rome, in the power of a foreign enemy, beheld her sovereign a captive, her nobles by exactions reduced to beggary—her museums plundered—and enlightened travellers prevented from approaching her walls, no class suffered so severely as her artists; whose resources were thus completely intercepted—and they were absolutely ex-

piring of want in their deserted workshops [1]. Canova, at this period, appeared like a ministering angel. He enabled the youth, by pensions, to persevere in their studies; and the more advanced he supported, not with money, but by judiciously employing the most necessitous in making highly finished drawings and engravings of his own works, for which the most liberal prices were allowed. He also established

[1] The French, to do them justice, were superior to the present oppressors of Italy, in as far as an enlightened but selfish despotism is superior to a *selfish* and ignorant one;—but we must not be deceived; they did oppress, and they plundered Italy, particularly the Papal states: in 1811 especially, the state of the capital was even worse than is represented in the text. We shall be told of their patronizing the arts—Canova and perhaps one or two others had something to do; but what became of numbers less known, and to encourage whom would have given no *eclat*? We shall be told of their excavations in Rome;—an English gentleman in the improvement of his estate removes more surface in *one* year than they did in *seven*. Perhaps their admirers consider as improvements, the converting the Roman Forum into a dusty *promenade*, and planting a shrubbery round the Colosseum!

an extensive engraver's press, for the purpose of publishing these works, and to give employment in that department; in short, by very considerable sacrifices, with the noblest disinterestedness, and in the most soothing manner, he supplied the wants of all. It was by such acts of public munificence, and by innumerable instances of private benevolence, that his memory was rendered so dear to his country;—it was this universal usefulness which inspired such inconsolable regret for his loss. He had already lived long enough for glory, but it was felt, that for the sake of virtue he should never have died. Of this beneficence one instance will be sufficient; and from the disposal of the three thousand crowns, which as Marquis of Ischia he enjoyed, the general mode of expending his fortune may be appreciated.

Of this sum, the Academy of Archaiology obtained an annual provision of 600
Annual pensions to three Roman youths,
or of the Papal states, students in
the first classes of sculpture, paint-

ing and architecture, to be enjoyed three years, by monthly payments of 20 crowns, - - 720

Three annual premiums of 120 crowns each, to be decided by competition of young artists [1], - - 360

Annual present to the Academy of St Luke for the purchase of books, &c. - - - 100

Subsidy to the Academy de' Lincei, 10 crowns per month, - 120

Annual fund for the relief of poor artists, - - - 1100

That this latter fund might be impartially administered, it was placed under the management of a committee of five professors of the Academy. The general distribution is also to be admired. The Antiquarian Academy was of recent establishment, and its means consequently limited, at the same time its objects were important; the two others required no such encouragement; while more than two-thirds of the

[1] The successful works to remain the property of the Academy of St Luke.

whole sum is devoted to the relief and support of individuals.

A mind thus awake to the duties of universal philanthropy, in the retirement of private life, was feelingly alive to the sympathies of gratitude and friendship. Indeed, in a heart which all the virtues appeared to constitute their temple, these latter shone as the presiding divinities. Every evidence of attention,—every proof of attachment, which it was thought would gratify the living, or denote respect for the dead, Canova delighted to exhibit. His letters—the history of his works—his every action and sentiment, declare this disposition. His purse—his chisel—his interest were always at the command of those with whom he lived in habits of intimacy. Of the young men, says one of his friends [1], whom I recommended to his notice, there was no one who did not receive the desired assistance; whether of employment, of advice, or of money; one youth alone, of

[1] The younger Falier.

much talent, but poor, for more than two years had an annual pension of 320 crowns. Such charities were independent of his more public gratuities; of which several instances have fallen under the author's own knowledge. Many of his productions were originally given as presents; and of his most beautiful sepulchral marbles, several were voluntary offerings at the shrine of friendship; while those to the memory of *Falier* and of *Volpato* bear inscribed the obligations of the dedicator. The former being his first protector, to whose early care were ascribed his future successes, was regarded with peculiar reverence; and as if testimonies of this respect ought to be multiplied, the original cenotaph was always retained at Rome, placed in a conspicuous situation in the workshop, and casts sent to various academies. An English lady of rank [1], acquainted both with the Falier family, and with the artist, also states, that in visiting the studio of the latter, he would often in-

[1] Lady William Bentinck. The anecdote rests on the best authority, that of the younger Falier.

termit his labours to converse with her on the kindness, the excellent instructions, and the personal worth of his "good Father," as he was wont to term the aged Senator. Of the generous protection which, during the difficulties of his early career in Rome, was extended to him by the ambassador Zulian; as also of the valuable patronage experienced, during the same time, from the Marchioness Gentili—Lord Cawdor—Sir William Hamilton—and Prince Rezzonico, Canova ever retained a truly grateful remembrance. At that arduous period Gavin Hamilton was his constant Mentor, to whose encouragement and advice he continued through life to ascribe much of his future eminence, constantly styling him —"il buon Hamilton." More lately, among the most intimate of Canova's living friends, are to be ranked—Antonio d'Este the sculptor—Antonio Selva, a relative of the architect already mentioned—the Chevalier de Rossi, so well known by his works in literature and the arts—Professor Rosini of Pisa—Giordani of Bologna, distinguish-

ed by his writings both in verse and prose[1] —Missirini, already known to the reader— the younger Falier — Count Roberti of Bassano — Count Cicognara of Venice— and M. Quatremére de Quincy of Paris. With the four last mentioned, and with the heirs of Professor Bossi, the painter of Milan, will principally be found the letters of Canova. But to particularize every instance,—to give the names of the numerous individuals of rank and talent, or eminent in learning and taste who have enjoyed an intimate correspondence with the Subject of these memoirs, would encroach too far upon their limits—suffice it

[1] He has promised Memoirs of Canova, and even made some progress in the work during the life of the artist,—but on this subject, Italy has been encouraged to hope for interesting accounts from the pens of Giordani—Cicogna—Countess Albrizzi—and Sartori Canova; yet nothing has yet come to light. Count Cicognara has also given some grounds for expecting a more detailed account than is afforded by his elegant little memoir written on the spur of the occasion, and seems, of all others, the best qualified to do the subject justice.

therefore to know, that a favour conferred upon Canova was never forgotten; and that no man of genius, or of worth, once introduced to his regard, ever ceased to be an esteemed friend.

In the expression and maintenance of his friendships also, there were apparent an affectionate simplicity and delicacy of mind and an unworn freshness of sentiment—the kindly overflowing of a soul, unhackneyed in the prescriptive modes of the world, and ever youthful in its affections, which won more and more upon the heart. The Sculptor of the most magnificent works of modern art,—he whose powers drew upon him the admiration of Europe, would sit down in the most endearing singleness of good will to carve a medallion or *cameo*, or other little ornament, as a pledge of remembrance for some absent friend. The portraits of those most dear to him were also carefully collected, whether sculptured by himself, or painted by his order; "for," as he used to say, "seating myself in an apartment thus decorated, it is only think-

ing over our past conversations, or reflecting on their virtues, and I am as it were transported into the society of all my friends at once." Many of these likenesses were likewise sculptured by his own hand in a most exquisite manner, which were set in rings, and constantly worn by him, — as if he wished always to have before his eyes the images of those he loved. But on this subject it will be gratifying to peruse his own sentiments, expressed in one of his early letters, and with an idiomatic and unaffected simplicity that would be lost in a translation; even the verbal inaccuracies will be viewed with interest, as exhibiting a great mind bewildered in a medium of thought to which its powers are unused:

" Mi spiace a doverle dire cosa ne volesse fare del ritratto del mio buon Padre (perdoni l'espressione), perchè non ho ancora fatto ciò che voleva. Ma non per negarle il suo desiderio le dirò, che l'ordinai in proffilo perche la mia intenzione si è di fare un bassorilievo di un soggetto decoroso, e in quello porvi il ritratto de' miei

benefattori, tra i quali uno de' primi posti lo deve avere certamente l'eccell. Padre suo. Ecco la mia idea. Ma veggo che forse prima di portarmi a situare la memoria del procur. *Emo* non potrò aver tempo di modellarlo [1]." The artist here states his intention of composing a basso relievo on some elevated subject, and to introduce under the different characters, the portraits of his principal benefactors,—a design which the increasing numbers of these induced him to exchange for the affectionate methods mentioned above.

This gratitude to protectors and patrons was equally remote from servility and adulation, as it was opposed to overweening sensitiveness of independence, or absurd pretensions to equality. Canova, in his intercourse with the great, never forgot that talents as an accomplished artist had alone procured distinction; while his bearing, modest and respectful, yet shewed that he was disposed neither to arrogate

[1] Canova to Falier, from Rome, Dec. 20. 1794.

groundless claims, nor to sully his genuine and honourable rights to respect. His independence was displayed in freedom of judgment—in candour of sentiment, not in petulant assumptions, or in eccentricity of disposition which courtesy may tolerate, but never pardons. This true dignity of mind marked his whole course of action, and was displayed in a strict regard to veracity and justice, whether in morals or in art, however contrary to the wishes or the proceedings of those by whom his opinion was desired. Not to descend to minor instances, — In frequently discoursing with Napoleon, he fearlessly reprobated the outrages committed in Italy; maintained the rights of the Pope, then a prisoner in France; boldly remonstrated against the removal from the public museums of objects of art; and subsequently in Rome, refused to attend the French commissioners, who plundered under the pretence of purchase, private collections, because his former estimates of valuation had not been regarded. To his own Sovereign, the mild and amiable Pius,

we have seen how affectionately he was attached; and their intercourse was conducted with all the sincerity of private friendship. These ties, death hardly seemed to interrupt. The Pontiff contributed largely to honour the memory of the Sculptor, while the latter bequeaths to his Holiness a pledge of esteem, in the following kind and respectful terms: "*Alla sacra persona del Santo Padre Pio Papa VII., oggetto qualunque della mia eredità che possa essergli grato;*" granting the privilege of selecting from his whole possessions whatever might prove the most agreeable.

Thus inspired by all its higher charities, the soul could hardly remain untouched by the softer sensibilities of the heart. Accordingly, it appears from his own confession, that Canova was early and feelingly susceptible of the influence of love. This sentiment ever exists purest and brightest in the most generous breasts; his attachments were consequently always honourable; but one master-passion, to which love itself was subservient, engrossed every

thought,—the desire of renown. Hence, though twice on the eve of marriage, he never entered into that state; fearing, as his friends assert, lest he should thus, by domestic cares, be diverted from giving undivided attention to professional pursuits. In the story of his earliest love, if a juvenile and vague aspiration may be so termed, there was something of romantic and melancholy interest, which seems long to have shaded with perceptible colouring his future musings. While pursuing his studies in the Farsetti Palace, on first arriving in Venice [1], he one day beheld a female, somewhat older than himself and very beautiful, enter the gallery accompanied by a friend or attendant, who daily departing soon after, returned again before the hour of closing, leaving the former to pursue her studies which chiefly consisted in drawing from antique heads. Chance first placed the youthful pair near each

[1] See Chap. IV. It is very common for the youth of both sexes devoted to the arts, to pursue their studies in the same collection, and at the same hours.

other; and some secret excellence hitherto undiscovered, subsequently determined him constantly to select as models such subjects as brought him nearest the fair artist. Time thus rolled away, and the youth found his bosom penetrated with new — delicious — but undefinable sensations. He knew not why he wished to be near her,—or why he delighted to gaze on her mild and lovely countenance—so pale, so delicate, yet so full of feeling;—nor could he tell why the furtive glance was so often directed to her sylph-like form and graceful movements;—but he felt that with such a being he should be for ever happy—although incapable of defining his ideas of that happiness. One day the object of this silent adoration was absent;—another and another passed, still she did not appear. Antonio was inconsolable—but he shrunk from inquiry, for he feared that every one already possessed the secret of his thoughts. Many days elapsed in this uncertainty, during which he was indefatigable in study; for she had once, while

leaning on the shoulder of her companion, praised his work as being *assai bello*;—words never forgotten! though answered only by a silent obeisance, and he hoped again to attract her notice. At length the attendant again appeared—alone and habited in deep mourning;—the heart of the youth failed at the sight, but summoning courage as she passed in departing with a portfolio, he ventured to inquire for her friend. *La Signora Julia*, replied she, bursting into tears,—is dead: No more was asked, and nothing more said. Who Julia was Canova never knew:—but her name, her image, long remained engraven on his memory. He was then engaged under Ferrari on the statues which still embellish the villa Trepolo, near Carbonara. How irksome must the labour bestowed on these stiff-mannered and uninteresting figures have been to his ardent imagination, glowing with the enthusiasm which his feelings were then calculated to inspire! The incident, in fact, aided in the formation of more elevated conceptions;

he longed to realize in the perfection of art the beauty he had unconsciously loved. Even in after life, when labouring to unite the purity of angelic charms with the soft living forms of mortal loveliness, fancy reverted to early impressions, and clothed in her vivid hues, the young—the beautiful —the unfortunate Julia.

Modesty has ever been regarded as an inseparable characteristic of great talents. Under a seeming moderation in the estimate of one's own merits, however, much of intellectual pride may frequently be discovered, the selfish and engrossing operation of which produces the very humility we admire. But the modesty of Canova was the genuine offspring of pure singleness of mind, and of extensive and correct views; it was consequently equally conspicuous in the artist as in the man. There are two methods by which we are enabled to judge of our own progress; comparison with what has been accomplished by others, and by considering the perfection still remaining unattained. No

man of real genius can be ignorant of the extent of his superiority in the former instance; while the greater that genius, the more deep will be his sense of inferiority in the latter. The Sculptor of Possagno, therefore, affected not to deny or to undervalue the improvements which his exertions had been instrumental in effecting. But with that true modesty that spares the feelings and the self-love of others, while it also benefits knowledge, by attributing the eminence acquired to causes equally within the control of all; he constantly maintained, that any one who laboured with the same diligence, and observed the same course of study, would arrive at the same excellence. "My masters," he used to say, "have been Nature and Antiquity. These are open to all, and appreciable by all. The only merit I can justly claim, is perhaps to have first recalled attention to these true sources of beauty and sublimity." To simple and judicious praise of his works he still listened in silence; but if a panegyrist extolled

them for refinement of elaborate composition, or subtilty of remote allusion, he constantly disclaimed all such intention; saying with a smile, "Indeed, my friend, you give me credit for greater ingenuity than I possess. I merely endeavoured to express, by the simplest means, the most natural and obvious thoughts on the subject."

Avarice of fame—desire of honour, were the dominating passions of Canova's mind; yet, when enjoying the intoxicating objects of his ambition, and to an extent unprecedented in the annals of art, the native simplicity and modesty of his disposition he retained unimpaired. Enrolled among the Nobility of several states, decorated with orders of Knighthood by different princes, and associated in the highest professional honours, he still remained among his friends the gentle and unassuming being as in the outset of life [1]. His private

[1] The following are some of his honours: Marquis of Ischia, Noble of Asolo, which rendered him a Patrician of Venice,—Citizen of the republic of San Ma-

habits, indeed, eminently partook of the unostentatious plainness of his general character. He rose early, and bent his whole attention during the day to professional labours. Mixing little in public society, he usually spent his evenings at home, having always a few chosen friends to *dine* with him, whom he entertained with great cordiality, but without any pomp or unnecessary display. From inclination, which habit, and the necessity of nursing a precarious state of health, had reduced almost to abstemiousness, he was extremely moderate in the enjoyments of the table. But after even these frugal repasts, a short repose was always requisite, his powers of digestion being so feeble, that the slightest

rino,—Knight of the order of the Golden Spur—of Christ—of the Aulic order of Leopold—of St George of Russia—of the two Sicilies,—Commander of the order of the Iron Crown,—Inspector-General of the fine arts in Rome,—President of the Vatican commission —of the Academies of St Luke and Archaiology,—associate of the National Institute of France, and Pensionary member of that of Italy,—Associate of all the most celebrated Academies of Europe, &c. &c. &c.

exertion of body or mind materially deranged them. His friends were therefore careful to introduce after dinner light and agreeable conversation, which might amuse, without agitating his mind; and in this Canova joined with the utmost cheerfulness. If, however, any subject connected with the arts were mentioned, or of a nature otherwise calculated to interest deeply the feelings, so keen were his perceptions, and so lively his sensibility, that the system certainly suffered from this excess of mental activity. After thus spending in the bosom of friendship the close of each day, the conversation becoming gradually more serious and animated as the evening advanced, he retired before eleven to his apartment; and either immediately sought repose, or amused himself with a book, or more frequently with his pencil, and at such hours many of those beautiful sketches were composed, some of which have already been published under the title of *Pensieri*. To describe one day, is to delineate the whole life of Canova, so equa-

ble its tenor, so regular his habits, and so confirmed his industry.

In personal appearance Canova presented nothing remarkable, or to attract regard; and in this respect, his maturity did not correspond with the promises of early youth. His stature hardly exceeded the middle size; but his person slender and elegant in its forms, seemed to exceed the actual height. At the same time, though thus far from being of athletic proportions, his frame was muscular, and apparently possessing no extraordinary vigour, yet, like Michael Angelo, he could surpass any workman in the mere mechanical labours of his profession. His hair was black and curled in natural luxuriance round a forehead of the noblest dimensions; but the outline of his features, in their calm and ordinary state, was by no means strikingly grand or imposing. His countenance owed its attractiveness and its powerful beauty entirely to facility of expressing the workings of the mind. The formation of the neck, the marking of the

muscles, and their junction with the head and bust, were also singularly fine,—beauties, which his usual careless manner of loosely tying the handkerchief, permitted in part to be seen. It is remarkable, that in these respects his statues are wonderfully perfect, and the neck of his own bust in particular, is a frequent study with artists. Few men are so totally devoid of personal singularities as was Canova. His air, his manner, even his dress, bore the appearance only of unaffected benevolence and simplicity, over which an extreme modesty threw no formality or constraint. The stranger might thus have departed without carrying away any other impressions, save those of cordial respect and esteem; yet even in casual conversation—some trait of lofty feeling, or of original thought—some striking evidence of a mind sometimes deficient in the ordinary sources of conventional judgment, but taking its own novel and comprehensive grasp of the subject, would unconsciously break forth to betray the commanding intellect, and to impress

the speaker on the memory. Into the domestic circle he carried all the mild and gentle virtues which distinguished his public character; and in all the relations of social life he was exemplary. His dearest friend, for more than twenty years the sole companion of his journies, and the confident of his designs, was his Brother; while on his demise, the only other surviving relative, *Sig. Dominico Maniera*, for the illustrious name of Canova must now become extinct, enjoys the remaining fortune of the artist. To his mother *Angelina Zardo*, though attached by none of the endearing recollections of childhood, he ever proved dutiful and kind; and on her death in 1812, he consecrated to her memory one of his most admired cenotaphs.

In professional intercourse with other artists, Canova was eminently distinguished by the same moral qualities that regulated his general conduct. Generous from natural disposition, and severely just in the self-estimation of his own proper merits,

he was totally insensible to the mean passions of envy and jealousy—those exacerbations of overweening egotism, or of imbecile mediocrity. The progress of art, through the successful achievements of others, seemed to afford the same pleasure as if accomplished by his own exertions. Of the talents and performances of cotemporaries, he consequently spoke with the utmost candour and liberality. Carrying this disinterestedness to a still higher pitch, his personal assistance and advice were always at the service of those who desired their aid; and he would at all times leave his own studies to visit the work of any artist expressing a wish to have his counsel or opinion; nor did their frequency diminish his willingness of attention to such calls. Not to receive pupils, however, was a resolution from which nothing could induce him to deviate; and not a single instance can be cited, where a scholar, in the strict sense of the term, boasts of having derived instruction directly from him, who must be considered as the Father of

the living school. The motives in thus waving the responsibility, or the drudgery of tuition, may have been various; the ostensible one as assigned by himself was, " the fear of appropriating the reputation of those placed under him, whose excellences would thus be attributed to the master,—not to their own deserts." But though refusing to become the private instructor of individuals, to the interests of his workmen he always proved most friendly; and when any one of these evinced decided proofs of superiority; or when any young artist exhibited good capabilities, he found in Canova a willing and powerful patron, who by procuring or giving commissions was ever ready to publish and to advance his merit. In forwarding the objects of this beneficent patronage, the numerous busts of illustrious characters with which he adorned the Pantheon, now, since their expulsion thence, to be seen in the Museum of the Capitol, were executed by his order, and at his own private charge. Thus at once paying homage to departed

worth, and ministering to the necessities of rising talent. All these transactions were marked by that delicacy so grateful to the feelings, which even in giving advice conciliates our self-love, and in bestowing other favours doubles the obligation, while it lessens the weight of gratitude. The Author was acquainted at Rome with a young artist, who spoke of this amiable quality in his benefactor with the enthusiastic affection of one who had never felt the oppression of patronage. "Forbear acknowledgment," Canova would say, "you owe me nothing, —a man is honoured by countenancing merit; and I only now perform a duty, because fortune has enabled me to do so, which hereafter others will claim from you."

As regards the individual pursuits and private habits of study which distinguished the subject of these Memoirs,—to his continued and unwearied industry their pages have frequently borne testimony. This application of a mind so highly endowed was attended with a corresponding improvement and extent, even in the accessory ac-

quirements of literature. Thus, a progressive advance not only in knowledge, but also in the facilities and even graces of composition, (as is remarked by one who long enjoyed the pleasure of his correspondence,) may distinctly be traced in the letters of our Artist. These are seldom, if ever characterised by lengthened or acute disquisition; but they are always pleasing from an expression of amiable sentiment, unaffected simplicity, and latterly beauty of style; a marked difference in this respect being observable between the epistolary efforts of a later date, and those of early life. The former, without being less simple or ingenuous, are written with correctness and elegance of language, while the previous ones abound in provincialisms and inaccuracies. The general acquirements of Canova were entirely those of an artist and a man of taste,—antiquities,—history,—and polite literature; but with science, properly so called, either intellectual or physical, he must be considered to have remained totally unacquainted, save in such scattered lights as con-

versation had supplied. This is exactly as might have been expected, and perhaps as it ought to be. "Art," says Michael Angelo, "is jealous, and requires the whole man to herself." But in the really collateral knowledge now mentioned, his attainments were both accurate and extensive. The study of antiquity he pursued with ardour; the Society instituted at Rome for that purpose owes its existence chiefly to his exertions, and what of their transactions have yet appeared were published principally at his expense. In the same disinterestedness excavations were carried on, and the more important remains thus uncovered, judiciously erected on the spot [1]. The valuable additions and improved arrangements introduced into the Museums of the Vatican, and the Capitol, under his management, would alone sufficiently attest his judgment andhis taste. His reading had been both select and varied. In the early part of life the evenings were thus employed,—

[1] As at *Roma Vecchia* in the Campagna, and along the Appian way.

a practice which subsequently continued occasionally to be pursued; but commonly some one read to him while he was at work,—*così va bene in doppio*, as his own letters have it:—thus good was doubled. The office of reader was usually supplied by some friend—happy thus to oblige him for the sake of enjoying his conversation in the pauses of labour. This amicable service he was in the habit of repaying by some little tribute of art; and it was with no common feelings of pleasure that one of these gifts was viewed,—a portrait of a Venetian ecclesiastic, painted by Canova's own hand, and presented to the owner as a token of regard for having thus officiated in 1805, while the Sculptor was employed on the statue of *Madame Buonaparte* [1]. The works most commonly perused were translations of the classical writers of Greece and Rome, with the most esteem-

[1] The subject and owner of this portrait is the Abbate Tonello, now Maestro di Capella at Treviso. It is therefore a mistake that Canova did not practise painting after the year 1798.

ed authors of modern Italy. In selecting from these, such writings were preferred which presented the subject under the most graphic aspect, and in the most sententious manner. Hence, among the ancients, Tacitus and Polybius were most valued; while, among the Italians, Dante, Ariosto, and Machiavelli were the greatest favourites, as affording the richest and most decided pictures, or the most characteristic views of the times and events which they describe.

In treating of the peculiar habits of composition by which he was distinguished, or the aids to invention employed by Canova, it is to be regretted that modesty prevented his committing to writing any theoretic opinions, or modes of practice connected with his art. That such a design was contemplated sufficiently appears from the following letter to Cicognara, written in 1812:—"It will no doubt be matter of surprise when I tell you, that I have not composed a single line on the subject of my art: I have indeed always intended to

do so, but the time for carrying my resolution into effect has never arrived; at some future period it may. I am determined, however, to give observations on my own works, which may perhaps be extended to sculpture in general, and to its few elements: but I could never be so vain as to think of composing a treatise. I shall confine myself solely to the principles on which I have prosecuted my own labours, and nothing more." But though no writings of this accomplished Sculptor can thus be resorted to, yet its grand fundamentals are clearly discernible from a careful examination of his style; while his practical methods, and concise, luminous and valuable precepts are still retained in the memory, or even in the note-books of his friends. Authentic and ample sources of explanation, as of deduction, are thus supplied.

From an early hour of the morning, his first studies, while the hand was steady and the mind vigorous, were dedicated to composition or to modelling; afterwards,

during the latter part of the day, he occupied himself in working with the chisel, and in finishing his statues. Canova naturally possessed an imagination of great energy, and industry had supplied a most copious store of materials: his invention consequently flowed abundantly, without effort, and almost spontaneously, his masterly hand being fully adequate to the rapid expression of these "thick-coming fancies." But over the rich treasures thus poured forth, the judgment presided in severe scrutiny: in correcting he was therefore slow and fastidious. First ideas were hastily thrown upon paper in slight outlines, which were often changed and retouched, so that finally little of the original design remained; yet each successive alteration evidently appears an improvement. Such primitive sketches were very frequently composed without any direct object in view, the artist esteeming a voluntary exercise, where the mind is unfettered by apprehensions of the immediate consequences of its operations, favourable

to the creation of beautiful or novel conceptions. These loose thoughts, which he termed *ozii*, or "recreations," were carefully preserved for future use; and even in those already published, the germ, the embryo of more finished productions, or at least the suggesting train of combinations, is sometimes discernible [1]. Having at length satisfied himself with the design of any projected work, as it would appear in painting, his next care was to examine and recompose it, according to the principles of sculpture. The modelling tool was now substituted for the port-crayon, and the sketch transferred to wax or clay. In this first and smaller model, the composition was carefully studied in the arrangement of the individual parts, and in the general effect, every thing being determined with just precision. In this condition, with the

[1] The Plates published at Rome in the spring of 1823, on which the observation in the text is founded, were Apollo and the Muses—Sports of Cupids with the Nymphs and Graces—Market of Love—Dancing Nymphs—and one miscellaneous subject.

masters anterior to Canova, it had served as the only guide in forming the statue. With the latter, these were merely preliminary steps conducting to the full perfection of the real model, which was composed of exactly the same dimensions as the future marble, and completed with all the delicacy, beauty and truth, which skill, genius, and the constant study of nature could command.

The Sculptor having thus effected the completion of a model, which he knew must prove an unerring and an exalted canon, the manual labour of the marble was safely and profitably confided to inferior powers. But, when its last superficies was to be formed—when all that finally meets the eye was to be created, the inspiring touches were trusted to the master-hand alone. Under this influence only could the figure assume all the *silent* attributes of beauty and of life,—all the effects of motion save mobility,—all the sublimities of conceivable excellence, blended with the warmer sympathies of nature! These lof-

tier graces of art, in all Canova's works, are also united with a delicacy and minuteness of finish, unimpaired by dryness or littleness of manner, for which elsewhere among the moderns we look in vain, and which, even in antiquity, appear to have been attempted in few instances. *This* exquisite purity of surface and lubricity of contour have given rise to the idea that this splendour and softness of polish were not produced by the legitimate operations of sculpture, but by some secret wishes or preparations. That such processes were employed by the Greek sculptors is by no means a singular belief[1]; and in the search of these he even instituted experiments, the results of which were either fruitless or disregarded. It is certain, therefore, that his statues owe their unrivalled softness wholly to the use of the chisel and the

[1] See the celebrated passage in Pliny, Lib. 35. cap. 2., where Nicias the *painter* is said, *manum admovisse*, to have operated on the *sculptures* of Praxiteles by means of a certain composition, or *circumlitio*, a word which has sadly posed commentators.

file applied by his *own* hand. When they had thus received their last finish, they were indeed frequently washed in a mixture of water and pumice-stone or emery, reduced to a very fine powder, which, by its different action or adhesion on surfaces variously polished, was supposed to anticipate the effects of time, diffusing over the crude brightness of recent labour an agreeable and harmonious colouring.

Such were the external modes of composition, such the practical methods of operating, and such the high perfection to which these were carried in the sculptures of Canova. But to penetrate beyond these—to ascertain the more intellectual principles that dictated their adoption, and regulated their exercise, we must view the artist both in his works, and in his previous habits of self instruction. The connexion here constantly maintained will at once explain the cause and the extent of excellence. The education of Canova constitutes a phenomenon in the philosophy of art; and as the effort solely of his own voli-

tion—as the fruit of his own judgment, would alone entitle him to rank among superior minds. In an age of mannerism he reverted to the study of nature, which in fidelity and beauty of imitation he carried nearly to its possible boundaries. To this consummate knowledge of *material* art, if the expression may be allowed, was subsequently added a profound acquaintance with the relations under which *truth* and imagination produce results sublime, graceful or lovely;—and, lastly, to maintain a mutual harmony and subordination between the Natural and the Ideal, was the scope, aim, and ultimate purpose in all his compositions. In progressively following out this glorious system, he was necessarily brought into familiar and constant intercourse with the only true sources of beauty, grandeur and sublimity in sculpture,—nature and the antique; from each of which was derived one leading precept that chiefly directed his representation of form, and expression of character. In the former, he was the first to discover, or at least to re-

duce to practice, the trinary combination of constituent members in a whole; or that law of arrangement in the living, as in the inanimate world, seems to place beauty in the harmonious relation between a primary, and two secondary forms [1]. The delightful propriety, and just ordonnance of parts, devoid of all obvious symmetrical or artificial balancing of masses, so conspicuous in his statues, arise from the observance of this principle. The second precept was deduced from the antique, in which he found, that however dependent on the ideal, the grand or the beautiful might appear,—yet in certain points,—as the fleshy texture of the surfaces,—the equable swelling of the muscles,—and in the fugitive traits which infuse life and spirit into the composition; nature was always imitated faithfully, without exaggeration or improvement. Hence, when others would have deemed the statue invested with its utmost excellence,—

[1] Cicognara,—Observations of Canova.

when he had fixed the lineaments of the most sublime intelligence which the divinity of his ideal could impress; Canova, before finally dismissing the marble from his hand, carefully compared every part anew with the living form; and, adding by slight but masterly touches of the chisel, those volatile traces of nature,—those evanescent effects of existence which the eye of genius alone can detect,—he seemed to call back the too lofty conception to humanity;—and to veil the too daring prestiges of fancy in the humbler semblances of reality.

It is this happy union of nature with imagination,—this ceaseless remounting to the eternal sources of perfect beauty, and of true science,—these well-directed endeavours to establish the basis of progressive improvement on the genuine and universal principles of art, which will most closely associate the name of Canova with its future history; and which have already placed him above every other master, from the age of Nicholas of Pisa, to the commencement of the nineteenth century. The great-

est sculptors, whose labours illustrate the intervening ages, either wrought without principles, and the same tomb thus closed over the knowledge and the possessor; or were at most but founders of partial theories, and exclusive schools. No one before Canova possessed all the requisites of excellence, or had traced in practice a rule which conducted to general and undeviating results. By those who lived prior to the age of Julius, and of Leo, accuracy of imitation was the only essential known or practised. The artists of that splendid period combined the magnificence of elevated theory with forceful execution; but in forsaking nature, they abandoned the true nurse of art, interrupted the march of improvement, and conducted their successors into greater and more fatal extravagance. To all preceding masters, therefore, we can have no hesitation in preferring the Sculptor of Possagno; whose works first exhibited the union of exalted principle, just expression, refined conception, and vigorous practice.

Compared with the ancients, Canova must ever remain inferior, in as far as the moderns must be indebted for their noblest precepts, to the examples of Greece. But his was no servile imitation, though to have constantly studied their works, forms his greatest praise. He laboured to discover the principles from which flowed the perfections of ancient art,—these acquired, he rivalled the inventors in their application. The degree of this approximation is sufficiently evident from the circumstances, that the works in which direct imitation may be traced, can yet bear the comparison without disparagement,—while in those grand and novel inventions, for which antiquity furnished no guide,—no falling off is to be discovered. The beauties of Hebe,—of the kneeling Pontiff,—of the group of Beneficence, creations solely of original powers, are equally conspicuous with those of the Perseus,—or the Mother of Napoleon, the immediate prototypes of which are the Apollo and the Argippa. In absolute merit, then, Canova equals the masters of

antiquity in fidelity of imitation,—in natural expression,—in accuracy and purity of execution; but he falls beneath them in sublimity and vigour of conception,—in the grandeur and vigour of his ideal,—and in that majesty of sustained character which lends to nature all the loftiness of blameless excellence in mind and form—yet leaves it nature still. When, however, we compare the perfection thus attained, with the previous lapse,—when we contemplate art raised from a degraded and lost condition, to an equality in some respects with those ever deemed the noblest specimens, and exhibiting only a degree of inferiorityin others;—when we view this improvement established on principles that must progressively lead to greater perfection,—how must we admire him who, in one short life, begun in poverty, obscurity, and ignorance, effected by his single efforts, this glorious revolution! Surely it is not exaggeration to affirm, that Canova is not only the greatest of all modern Sculptors, but is hardly to be ranked inferior to the

greatest names in the annals of ancient greatness.

But, however this estimate of his powers may be modified by the vascillations of opinion, or the vicissitudes of time; there is yet an abiding distinction that invests the Subject of these pages with more *real glory* than genius and art, in all their boasted triumph, can bestow;—it is the eminence of virtue. To soar beyond the usual limits of human capacity,—to call from their viewless spheres, or deep recesses, the secrets of philosophy,—to enchain sublime intelligence and perfect beauty in the creations of a mortal hand, are granted to few; but all men may learn to be good, and all may emulate his benevolence. This freshness of the heart,—this tenderness of the affections, when united with the mightiness of intellect, shed round the memory a softened influence, and a bright utility perpetually renewed: they resemble the cot with its little domain of cultivation, on the else sterile bosom of the Alp; the grandeur of the latter, indeed, elevates the soul,—yet

overcomes it with a sense of awful vastness, and dreary solitude; the latter gently brings us back to the sympathies of life, and soothes the mind with images of its kindliest charities. In describing the studies of the Artist, therefore, it has been endeavoured to delineate the Man; and those who may deny the merits assigned to the Sculptor, will respect the virtues, and admire the actions of CANOVA.

CORRIGENDA.

In some instances in Chapter V., *for* Clement XII., *read* XIII. The Author's distance from the Press will account for, and it may be hoped excuse, any slight inaccuracies in other respects.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

CHRONOLOGICAL CATALOGUE, with the present Localities or Possessors of all the WORKS executed by CANOVA, from the period of his settling in Rome to the time of his death, that is, from 1780 to 1822. The dates, as affixed by himself, sometimes mark when the marbles, but most commonly shew when the models of the respective works were completed.

1781. Apollo crowning himself,—a small figure in marble. Baron Daru.

1782. Group of Theseus and the Minotaur. Count de Fries, Vienna.

1783. Statues of Piety and Meekness, in model. Studio of the Artist.

1787. Tomb of Clement XIV. The statue of the Pontiff is 13 Roman palms, and those of the Allegorical Figures 11 palms high. Rome, Church of the H. Apostles.

Statue of a Cupid. The head was a likeness of the young Prince Czartoriscky. Princess Lugumirschi.

1789. Statue of a Cupid, almost a copy of the preceding;—head ideal. Lord Cawdor.

Group, in model, of Venus crowning Adonis, with Cupid bringing Flowers. Studio of the Artist.

Psyche,—a statue in marble. Sir H. Blundell.

1790. Bassi Relievi, in model; viz. Briseis delivered to the Heralds—Socrates drinking the hemlock—Socrates taking leave of his Family—Return of Telemachus—Death of Priam.

Third Cupid, nearly as above. —— Latouche, Esq.

1792. Mausoleum of Clement XIII.;—height of the Pontiff 19 palms; of the Genius and Religion 15; Lions also colossal. St Peter's.

Head of a Cupid. Germany, Prince of Ausberg.

Bassi Relievi, in model; viz. Procession of the Trojan Matrons—Dance of the Daughters of Alcinöos—Socrates pleading before the Judges—Crito closing the eyes of Socrates.

1793. Second Statue of Psyche. Royal Palace at *Monaco*.

Group of Cupid and Psyche recumbent. Royal Palace of Compiegne, near Paris.

1794. Cenotaph of Chevalier Angelo Emo. Arsenal of Venice.

1795. Group of Adonis and Venus, natural size. Geneva, formerly at Naples.

Two Relievos in model, Education and Charity. Studio.

1796. Second Group of Cupid and Psyche recumbent. Prince Youssouppoff.

Statue of a Magdalen kneeling. Marquis Sommariva, Paris.

Hebe, statue in marble. Venice, Casa Albrizzi.

A Cupid with Wings. Prince Youssouppoff, Russia.

1797. Apollo, a small figure, modelled in 1787 as a Cupid. Marquis Sommariva.

Bassi Relievi in model; viz. Rome writing round a Medallion—Dance of Venus with the Graces—Death of Adonis—Birth of Bacchus—Socrates saving Alcibiades at Potidea.

Cupid and Psyche, standing. Palace of Compiegne.

Monument in Relievo of Bishop Giustianini. Padua, in the residence of the *Congregazione di Carita.*

1800. Cupid and Psyche, standing, —second group. Purchased by the Emperor of Russia.

Basso Relievo in model, of the Deposition from the Cross;—worked in marble by Antonio d'Este. This copy is in Venice. Col. Wadmanio.

Perseus with the Head of Medusa,—statue in marble, and size of the Apollo. Vatican Museum.

Creugas and Damoxenus, or the Boxers. Vatican Museum.

Colossal Statue of Ferdinand IV. King of Naples.

Repetition of the Perseus for Countess Tarnovosky. Poland.

1801. Repetition of the Hebe, for the Empress Josephine.

Hercules destroying his own Children,—a Basso Relievo in model.

1802. Colossal Group of Hercules and Lychas. Turlonia Palace, Rome.

1803. Colossal statue of Napoleon,—height 16 Roman palms. Duke of Wellington, a fine copy in bronze is in the Academy of Arts at Milan.

1804. Statue of Palamedes, in marble, semi-colossal. Villa Sommariva on the lake of Como.

Model of an intended Monument for Francesco Pesaro.

1805. Bust in marble of Pius VII., presented by the Sculptor to Buonaparte.

Bust in marble of the Emperor of Austria. Vienna.

Monument of the Archduchess Maria Christina. Vienna; the whole expense of this work amounted to upwards of L.10,000 Sterling.

Model in Relievo, for a monument to Alfieri. Studio of the Sculptor.

Statue of Madame Letizia, mother of Napoleon. Duke of Devonshire.

Venus Victorious, recumbent statue. Palazzo Borghese, Rome.

Venus coming out of the Bath. Palazzo Pitti, Florence. Two repetitions of this statue, one for the King of Bavaria, another for the Prince of Canino.

Theseus combating the Centaur, colossal group. Vienna.

Nymph dancing. This statue was exhibited at Somerset-house in 1823, and formerly belonged to Josephine, now (it is believed) in possession of the Duke Devonshire.

1806. Sepulchral Relievo of Countess D'Haro. Studio of the Sculptor.

Sepulchral Vase, with small relievos for the Baroness Deede. Padua.

Sitting Statue of the Princess Leopoldina Esterhazy. Vienna.

1807. Monument of Alfieri. Church of St Croce-Florence, erected by order of the Countess of Albany.

Bust in marble of Pius VII., presented by the Sculptor to his Holiness.

Bust of Cardinal Fesch. Rome.

Bust of Princess Paulina Borghese Buonaparte. Rome.

Two Statues of Paris, in Carrara marble, one finished in

1807. 1813, now in possession of the Emperor of Russia; the other completed in 1816, for the Hereditary Prince of Bavaria.

Model for an Equestrian Statue of Napoleon.

Model of a Monument to the memory of Lord Nelson.

1808. Cenotaph to the memory of Giovanin Volpato. Church of the Holy Apostles. Rome.

Cenotaph for Count de Sousa; two originals were wrought at the same time, one of which is in Rome, the other in Portugal.

Cenotaph to the memory of the Senator Falier. Venice.

Cenotaph for Frederic Prince of Orange. Padua.

Hector, a statue in marble, rather larger than nature, not quite finished when the Artist died, wanting the last polish.

Statue of the Muse Terpsichore. Marquis Sommariva, Paris.

Replica of the above, with some slight alterations. Sir Simon Clarke.

Bust in marble of the Princess of Canino.

Bust of Paris, for the then Ambassador of France.

1809. Repetition of the Kneeling Magdalen. Prince Eugene, Beauharnois was the original possessor.

Dancing Nymph, with cymbals. Prince Rossaumoffsky.

Dancing Nymph, with a garland. Sig. Manzoni of Forli.

1810. Colossal model of a Horse.

1811. Sitting Statue of Maria Louisa, with the attributes of Concord. Palace of Colorno near Parma.

Semi-colossal Statue of Ajax, companion to the Hector, and left in the same state. Both remained in the studio of the Sculptor.

1812. Colossal Bust of the Sculptor.

Sitting Statue of the Muse Polymnia, originally begun as

1812. a portrait of the Princess of Lucca, (Maria Eliza) subsequently finished in 1817, as an ideal work, and purchased by the Venetian States, for the Emperor of Austria. Cabinet of the Empress. Vienna.

Bust of the Princess of Lucca.

Statue of Peace, finished in 1815 for the Russian Count Romanzoff. Three successive heads of this family had negotiated grand treaties of peace.

Bust of Murat while King of Naples.

——— the Queen of Naples. (Murat's.)

Cenotaphs for two members of the Millerio family. Villa Gernetto, Milan.

Cenotaph to the memory of the Sculptor's Mother.

1814. Statue of Hebe, third repetition. Lord Cawdor.

The Graces,—a group in marble, ordered by Josephine, subsequently completed for Prince Eugene. Palace at Monaco.

The Graces,—a *replica* with alterations. Duke of Bedford.

Bust of Cimarosa, the musical composer. Museum of the Capitol.

——— Paris, presented to M. Quatremère de Quincy Paris.

——— Helen, presented to the Countess Albrizzi. Venice.

——— a Muse, presented to Professor Rossini. Pisa.

——— another Muse, lately belonging to the Countess of Albany.

——— another Muse for Count Pezzoli. Bergamo.

——— Replica of Paris. Hereditary Prince of Bavaria.

——— Peace, for Lord Cawdor.

Colossal Bust of Bossi, the painter, now on his monument at Milan.

1814. Colossal model for a Statue of Religion. The idea in this composition is very little different from that of the same figure in the monument of Rezzonico.

Statue in marble of the above. Lord Brownlow.

Cenotaph to the memory of Chev. Trento. Vicenza.

Recumbent Nymph listening to the lyre of Love. In the possession of his Britannic Majesty.

1816. Venus and Mars, group in marble. In the possession of his Britannic Majesty.

Hebe, fourth replica. Count Guerini, Forli.

1817. Sepulchral Monument for Cardinal York, with busts of the three last Stuarts, in mezzo relievo,—erected in St Peter's by order, and at the expense of his present Majesty.

A sitting Statue of the infant St John the Baptist. Count Blacas.

Four Ideal Heads. England. Ordered respectively by Lord Castlereagh, Sir William Hamilton, Sir Charles Long, and the Duke of Wellington. Of these heads, two are repetitions of the Helen.

Two Ideal Heads. In the possession of M. de Quincy and Count Sommariva.

Monument in small dimensions, with relievos of Angels supporting a medallion portrait of a Lady. Milan.

1818. Sitting Statue of Washington. New York, forwarded in 1820.

Statue of Venus, executed in marble in 1820. This statue is quite different from that of the Palazzo Pitti, and in character approaches nearer to the Venus of the Capitol than to the Medicean. Thomas Hope, Esq.

Colossal Statue of Pius VI. kneeling. St Peter's.

Model of a colossal Statue of Charles III. of Naples, intended to be placed on the colossal horse modelled for Napoleon.

Sepulchral Relievo for Sig. Manzoni of Forli.

1819. Model for a Statue of a sleeping Endymion, the statue begun, but not finished at the death of the artist.

Statue of a recumbent Magdalen, finished among the last works of the sculptor. Earl of Liverpool.

Model of a Statue of Dirce.

Herma, (that is a bust with the marble cut square from the junction of the neck with the shoulders,) of Corinna. Count S. di Crema.

Herma of Tuccia, the vestal virgin. —— Webb, Esq.

———— another Vestal Virgin.

———— a Philosopher.

———— Sappho, a repetition of the same as a bust.

Bust of Laura. Duke of Devonshire.

——— Beatrice. Count Cicognara, Venice.

——— Eleonora d'Este (Tasso's). Count Tasio, Brescia.

——— Repetition of the Helen,—always the same.

1820-21. Second colossal Horse, but differing from the former, intended for a statue of Ferdinand.

Sleeping Nymph, model.

Bust of Maria Louisa. Parma.

1822. Pietà in model,—group of the dead Christ, with the Virgin Mary and Magdalen.

Seven Relievos for the metopes of the Temple at Possagno: viz. Creation of the world,—Creation of the first man,—Death of Abel,—Sacrifice of Abraham,—the Annunciation, — the Visitation,—Purification of the Virgin. These were copied in marble by seven Venetian sculptors; the models are in the Academy.

Bust of Count Leopold Cicognara. Venice.

THE END.

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WITH

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